

**ESEA REAUTHORIZATION:  
RURAL HIGH SCHOOL REFORM**

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**FIELD HEARING**  
OF THE  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
**ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS**  
**SECOND SESSION**  
ON  
**EXAMINING ESEA REAUTHORIZATION, FOCUSING ON RURAL  
HIGH SCHOOL REFORM**

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JULY 23, 2010 (GILLETTE, WY)  
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## **FIELD HEARING: ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: RURAL HIGH SCHOOL REFORM**

**FRIDAY, JULY 23, 2010**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,  
*Gillette, WY.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:29 p.m. in the Education Center, Gillette College Technical, 3251 South 4J Road, Gillette, WY, Hon. Michael Enzi, presiding.

Present: Senator Enzi.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ENZI

Senator ENZI. I checked and there are contestants at the National High School Rodeo Championship from every one of the States for which we have Senators on the HELP Committee.

The purpose of the hearing, is for me to hear from more witnesses from rural areas. I'm the Ranking Member on the Senate HELP Committee, that means that if we were in the majority I'd be the chairman. The way that it's set up when we have a hearing in Washington, the chairman gets to pick all of the witnesses on a panel except one, and then both sides show up to beat up on the witnesses.

So, this is a much better venue, I got to pick all of the witnesses.  
[Laughter.]

I thank all of the witnesses for being willing to participate in today's hearing. And consequently, they're all rural witnesses who will help us build a vast volume of testimony that will be used as we fix No Child Left Behind, which is, of course, to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

I want to thank the college for letting us use this building. I want to thank all of the people who put this hearing together. I have several people here from my staff. I have Lindsay Hunsicker, who works on education every day, as does Beth Buehlmann. They both work on my education team. We have a few more people that are on that team, and they negotiate on the Federal education statutes, which range from ESEA to the Workforce Investment Act. We have been trying to get WIA through for a long time. If we could pass that we would train 900,000 people a year to higher skilled jobs in their area, but we haven't had any luck on getting that through, yet. We're working on that virtually every day.

The hearing today will be a roundtable style. Consequently, we're all up here instead of me up here and everybody else facing me in-

stead of the audience. The difference with the roundtable—I instituted roundtables when I became the chairman and Senator Kennedy came to like it well enough to use as well—is that instead of holding a panel with just 1 person for the minority and 5 for the majority, we usually agreed on, maybe, 15 witnesses together. Each of them would be people that actually do something, just as we have today. Each witness would tell what they did and then they'd have a conversation about how their idea might work with somebody else's idea. And consequently, we came up with a lot of things that were helpful.

I remember Senator Kennedy coming to me and saying, "You know, those roundtables are really fascinating, it's nice to learn something before we draft the bill."

[Laughter.]

I have a few formal comments here that I'll read for the record. After I introduce our witnesses, they'll each provide about 5 minutes of oral testimony, and once they've finished, the six of us will engage in a discussion on this important issue rather than having a question and answer exchange between me and the witnesses.

Before I turn to the expert panel, I do want to make some other opening comments to set the stage for the hearing. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, or HELP Committee—"we're from the government, we're here to help you"—started work on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act earlier this year with a series of 10 hearings on topics ranging from standards and assessments to the well-being of children. We've also sought input from the education community and received over 1,500 comments across the country. Today we're here to learn more about high school reform efforts in Wyoming and how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act can be amended to support these efforts.

The Federal Government's role in this discussion should be to encourage and support States and school districts so that more students graduate from high school on time with the knowledge and skills they need to attend college and enter the workforce without the need for remediation.

However, the present situation is discouraging. Every day in the United States, 7,000 students drop out of school. If the high school students who have dropped out of the class of 2009 had graduated instead, the Nation's economy would have benefited from an additional \$335 billion in income that they would have earned additionally over their lifetimes. It's an incredible statistic. Because we couldn't reach those 7,000 students, it will cost us and them \$335 billion in income, so we all lose.

Now our outlook in Wyoming is better, there's still work to be done. Wyoming is fortunate that over 80 percent of the students graduate from high school. However, that still means that 1,200 students who start high school don't make it to graduation day. To ensure both the future success of this great State and a higher quality of life for those students, we have to do better. We simply can not afford to lose those students. We must deal with the situation head on. We can not allow students to waste their senior year and graduate unprepared for any post-secondary education in a workforce that's focused on skills and knowledge.

As we look to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we need to strengthen programs that provide relevance, context, and rigor for students in both middle and high school. I believe it's time to bring attention to the secondary part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Federal Government needs to provide some resources to school districts for these efforts and ensure that the reforms used are data-driven and have a solid evidence base of success.

We'll hear from our experts today that these efforts are difficult, because there is no silver bullet when it comes to education reform. However, the Federal Government can help school districts by providing additional flexibility with the funds we provide to allow for the best possible solution for each struggling school.

In addition, it's important to emphasize the fact that a high school diploma does not guarantee that a student has learned the basics. Nearly half of all college students are required to take remedial courses after graduating from high school before they can take college level course work. Even in Wyoming, 15 percent of the Hathaway Scholarship recipients enroll in remedial courses once in college.

The witnesses before us today demonstrate that this work is hard but it can be done. Without a plan for reforming our secondary schools, the outcome for many of our students will not change, which is not acceptable. If we are to remain competitive in a global economy, we can not afford to lose people because they don't have the education and skills they need to be successful. Strong partnerships and alignment among K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, business, and government will help us meet this need.

I'm pleased to welcome the witnesses and thank them for being here today. I look forward to a healthy exchange of ideas that I can take back to Washington. All of it is being recorded and will become a part of the record, as will their entire written testimony.

I want to encourage each of you in attendance to send me any comments or ideas that you have, that you come up with from this discussion, or that you come up with later. We want to make the ESEA law a better law for children, for teachers, for administrators, and for parents. You can e-mail your comments to me by visiting my Web site, which is [www.enzi.senate.gov](http://www.enzi.senate.gov). I'll mention that address again later. I'll then share your comments with members of the HELP Committee. The unique challenges and needs of rural schools and students must be a part of any conversation we have around reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

I also want to mention that Jim McBride, the Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction is here with us today.

[Applause.]

He's been a tremendous contributor to us as we've been going through this process. Copies of one of the extensive letters that he's written to me regarding NCLB are over on the table for anybody that would like to have one.

We're gathering information any way that we can, so remember that you can send me your suggestions, ideas, and complaints.

Before we hear the testimony, I will introduce each of the witnesses, and each of them will have 5 minutes to summarize the testimony that they've submitted. Their whole testimony becomes part of the record and will be shared with all of the other Senators and staffs, and will be included in the record of the official hearing.

Each of these witnesses has extensive experience in the field of education, so I'll provide very abbreviated introductions this afternoon so that we can get to the testimony and conversation about issues.

I notice that we have a few legislators with us today, too. Could you stand, Greg, John?

[Applause.]

These are a couple of the Wyoming State legislators, and they're the ones that do the really heavy lifting on education, because States are mostly responsible for education. I thank you for all of your efforts.

So, in the way of introductions, we have Dr. Rollin Abernethy, he's a professor of plant biology and an associate provost at the University of Wyoming. Most recently he played a prominent role in the formation of the Wyoming P-16 Education Council, and serves as president of the council. Dr. Abernethy obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Agronomy Plant Physiology from Kansas State University, and a Ph.D. degree in Agronomy Plant Physiology from the University of Arizona.

We have Dr. Jim Rose, who is the Executive Director of the Wyoming Community College Commission. He is a Wyoming native, born in Casper, and Dr. Rose grew up in Goshen County. He graduated from the University of Wyoming with a degree in architectural engineering, and then obtained a Master's degree in Architecture from the University of Virginia. Dr. Rose served in a faculty position in civil and architectural engineering at the University of Wyoming for 18 years. He received a Doctorate in Education from the University of Wyoming, and in 1998, was elected to serve in the 55th Wyoming Legislature as a member of the House of Representatives.

Kevin Mitchell has served as the Superintendent of Schools in Park County School District No. 1 for 3 years. While Mr. Mitchell didn't begin his college course work until the age of 30, he has since earned four degrees and is currently pursuing a Doctorate. He's taught science and physical education, coached basketball, football, and track, served 3 years as a middle school principal, and is entering his 10th year as a superintendent. Mr. Mitchell was honored as the Wyoming Superintendent of the Year in 2009.

Lyn Velle, an old friend, who's been teaching me about these issues for a long time, has been the Coordinator of Career and Technical Education at Campbell County School District in Gillette, WY for the past 19 years. She's responsible for guiding the career academies in energy, transportation technology, and hospitality and tourism, and is the Wyoming State leader of the Project Lead the Way Program. Lyn has taught at the junior high, the senior high, and the college level in family and consumer education, and taught at an alternative high school in Rock Springs, WY. Dr. Velle received her Doctorate in Vocational Education Administration and School Law from the University of Wyoming.

Brandon Jensen was hired in March 2010 as the new principal of the Cody High School for the 2010–11 school year. He has served as the Assistant Principal of Cody High School for the last 4 years. In 2010, he was named the Wyoming Assistant Principal of the year. Prior to coming to Cody High School, Mr. Jensen served as an assistant principal at Walla Walla High School in Walla Walla, WA. Before becoming a school administrator, Jensen taught Spanish at the high school level for 11 years. He received a Bachelor's degree in Education at Eastern Washington University, a Master's degree in Curriculum Development from Heritage University, and his administrative endorsement from Portland State University.

I thank you all for being willing to do this. I need to mention, too, that for all of our hearings, and I've been doing hearings now for 14 years with almost all of them in Washington, we have this requirement about providing testimony in advance of the hearing. This is the first panel that I can remember where we have all the testimony in advance.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

It shouldn't be a first after that many years, but it is and it was a pleasure to read all of this, great information. So, if you will summarize your testimony for us, we'd appreciate it.

We'll start with Dr. Abernethy.

**STATEMENT OF ROLLIN ABERNETHY, Ph.D., PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE PROVOST, UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING, LARAMIE, WY**

Mr. ABERNETHY. Thank you, Senator Enzi, and colleagues on the panel.

Senator Enzi, colleagues on our panel, and the members of the audience, it is indeed an honor for me to be here today to be able to share with you all several initiatives of the University of Wyoming, the P–16 Education Council, or both. Several of these are shared initiatives. We believe these initiatives will advance a rigorous and effective and a more seamless educational system that supports high school reform.

I will go through these initiatives rather briefly, there are six of them. The first initiative that I would like to address is that of a rigorous and well-defined high school curriculum. Compelling evidence exists that successful completion of a defined and a rigorous high school course of study enhances post-secondary and career readiness. The content knowledge provided by college readiness curricula and career readiness curricula are increasingly very similar. The Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship, with its eligibility tied to the success curriculum, provides Wyoming students and their families a strong incentive to complete an academically challenging high school curriculum.

Both the University and the P–16 Council have strongly supported this success curriculum. With support at the State Legislature, with funding to the Wyoming Department of Education, the P–16 Council has fostered initiation of a long-term longitudinal study, and assessment of the impacts of both the scholarship, and of the curriculum, on Wyoming's school preparation and career readiness workforce enhancements. We believe any changes to this

curriculum need to be based on data, similar to that that would be acquired, or will be acquired, in this study.

The second initiative involves faculty articulation across grades 9 through 16. The enhanced transition of students from one level of education to the next is facilitated by conversations among educators across grade levels. Initially in biology, now in writing and reading and in mathematics, we are now undertaking these conversations. This program was conceived initially, and led by, the Wyoming School University Partnership under the leadership of director Dr. Audrey Kleinsasser, and now involves a number of university faculty, community college faculty and high school faculty.

The concept is simple, it brings together faculty from each grade level, in a specific area, subject matter, to discuss student learning goals at each grade level, using student work as the point of the discussions. The faculty participating have a strong desire to identify shared goals for student achievement. This is a true collaboration of peers, it's a key part, they view each other as equals from the beginning. As a result, the participants understand the challenges each face, they understand the aspirations each have for student learning, and by communicating and collaborating, make great strides in advancing those outcomes.

In summary, we think these articulation discussions are probably one of the most effective strategies for enhancing student transitions between grade levels, that we're aware of. We believe it will enhance high school completion and post-secondary and career readiness.

The Wyoming P-16 Education Council, a third initiative, has developed some college and high school course comparison charts. There are actually five of these, there are several up here on the table for people to pick up. So, I won't talk about those further.

The fourth initiative is the Common Core Standards, adopted only a month ago by the Wyoming State Board of Education. These standards are providing common outcomes for English language, arts, and mathematics. We believe these standards have immense capacity to—when integrated with Wyoming's State standards—bring forward a much more rigorous and more effective secondary and post-secondary system. The University has already supported and will be joining, if the Wyoming State Department of Education pursues it, a balanced assessment consortium that is designed to bring together educators at all levels and develop an assessment system for this common core standard that will improve, further, those activities.

Finally, if high school reform efforts are to achieve their potential, the local community must be engaged and must support an academically focused and effective school system. It's essential that we, as a country, move beyond the blame game. The community, parents, business owners, employees, government workers, civic leaders, and senior citizens, they all can—and all should—play a role in elevating the importance of an academically strong and effective school system. Teachers have a role, but it can not only be the teachers' role.

The Community School Movement, I'm just now starting to learn about, but I believe it deserves further study as we consider this as an approach to foster community engagement with our local

schools. Rural schools should have an advantage in that sense. On the one hand, in that the smaller scale simply allows it to happen more readily. However, it's also a disadvantage, possibly, in that rural community residents may have less diversity and experience of perspective.

On that premise, our P-16 Council is currently engaged in a project that will be our first experiment in engaging the community with educators. Dr. Rose, I think, might talk about that following my comments.

So with that, I thank you for this chance for a brief summary, to share some of the thoughts and initiatives of our P-16 Council at the University of Wyoming. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Abernethy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROLLIN ABERNETHY, PH.D.

SUMMARY

Dr. Rollin Abernethy, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Wyoming, Laramie, and president of the Wyoming P-16 Education Council, a non-profit education organization created to enhance the transition of students through each level of the educational system. Enhancing transitions between stages requires reinvigorated collaboration that leads to new and better academic and student supports, thereby increasing the likelihood of greater post-secondary participation and improved workforce preparation.

Six initiatives of either the University of Wyoming or the P-16 Education Council, or both will be presented. These initiatives will advance a rigorous, effective, and more seamless educational system that supports high school reform. The initiatives include:

*A defined and rigorous high school curriculum, the Hathaway Scholarship Success Curriculum.* Compelling evidence that successful completion of a rigorous high school course of study enhances post-secondary and career readiness is compelling. The Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship Program and Success Curriculum, strongly supported by the university and Council, provide Wyoming students a strong incentive for academically challenging coursework.

*Articulations by disciplinary faculty members across grades 9 through 16.* Enhanced transition from one level of education to the next is being facilitated by conversations among educators in biology, writing and reading and mathematics from high schools, community colleges and the university. Discussion and shared consensus on student learning goals and outcomes should enhance transition from one level of education to another.

*The Wyoming P-16 Education Council's high school and college course comparison charts.* Charts that compare and contrast features of high school and college coursework in mathematics, science, social studies, world language and writing will be provided and briefly discussed.

*Common Core State Standards initiative and comprehensive standards assessment consortia.* Adoption and integration of the Common Core standards and Wyoming State standards along with creation of a new generation of comprehensive standards assessment with a multi-state consortium offers promising potential for improved assessment of student and teacher effectiveness. UW and the Council are participants.

*Features of teacher preparation at the University of Wyoming.* We support inclusion of substantial content coursework for secondary education majors with concurrent degrees in the content area, increasing opportunity for teacher education students to work in public school classrooms with mentor teachers, and alternative certification programs that provide substantial instructional interaction in school classrooms. These are key elements of most effective teacher preparation programs.

*Community and schools, engaging the community to support more effective schools.* For high school reform efforts to achieve their potential, the local community must be engaged and support an academically focused and effective school system. The "community school" movement deserves further study as one approach to foster this engagement.

Good afternoon Senator Enzi and members of the committee. I am Rollin Abernethy, a professor of plant biology and currently Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Wyoming. I also serve as president of the Wyoming P-16 Education Council ([www.wy-16.org](http://www.wy-16.org)), a non-profit educational organization in its third year. The overarching mission of the P-16 Council is to enhance the transition of students from each level of education to the next and thereby increase post-secondary participation and workforce preparation. The Council members represent all four educational systems in Wyoming, primary through post-secondary and include business sector and legislative representatives. It is an honor to come before you today and share some of the efforts in which the University of Wyoming and the P-16 Council are engaged to improve student preparation for both post-secondary learning and work in our rural State. With one 4-year university, 7 community colleges and 48 school districts in Wyoming, we believe we have near unequalled opportunity to improve post-secondary participation and completion.

Today I will emphasize six initiatives that we believe will advance a more rigorous, effective and seamless educational system and support high school reform. These initiatives include:

1. A defined and rigorous high school curriculum, the Hathaway Scholarship Success Curriculum;
2. Articulations by disciplinary faculty members across grades 9 through 16;
3. The Wyoming P-16 Education Council's high school and college course comparison charts;
4. Common Core State Standards initiative and comprehensive standards assessment consortia;
5. Teacher preparation at the University of Wyoming; and
6. Engaging the community to support more effective schools.

#### RIGOROUS HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The evidence is extensive: completion of a rigorous course of study in high school enhances post-secondary participation, completion and career readiness. The traditional gulf between college-readiness curricula and career-readiness curricula is disappearing. With development and implementation of Wyoming's Hathaway Scholarship program, and scholarship eligibility linked to completion of the Hathaway Scholarship Success Curriculum, policymakers in Wyoming established a powerful incentive for students and families to pursue more challenging high school coursework ([www.k12.wy.us/eqa/Hathaway/hathway\\_rubric.pdf](http://www.k12.wy.us/eqa/Hathaway/hathway_rubric.pdf)). Likewise, our schools are challenged to provide this opportunity for their students. Development and implementation of the Hathaway Success Curriculum was an early stimulus for formation of the P-16 Council. The Council was initiated by the university in close collaboration with the Wyoming Department of Education and Wyoming Workforce Council. Both the university and the P-16 Council have contributed and strongly supported the Success Curriculum that will be fully implemented during the upcoming academic year. With support of the State legislature, the Council fostered initiation of a long-term longitudinal study including the assessment of outcomes. The necessity of sound data for informing decisions and formulating policy is one of the P-16 Council's key tenets.

#### FACULTY ARTICULATION ACROSS GRADES 9 THROUGH 16

The Wyoming School-University Partnership under the leadership of director Dr. Audrey Kleinsasser, along with several university faculty, community college and school faculty, formulated a program several years ago that continues to expand and mature. The program concept initially brought together faculty teaching biology in high school, community college and university classrooms for a discussion of student learning goals at each grade level using student work from the participating faculty classrooms as the focal point. The faculty participants engaged in this endeavor with a strong desire to identify shared goals for student achievement as they progress through successive grade levels. As a result, participants better understand and respect the challenges each face in their classrooms. Further, the faculty participants have collectively developed strategies and instructional exercises that help overcome some of the identified challenges.

Conversation among peers at their respective institutions has led to similar efforts with faculty in writing and reading, and in mathematics over the last 2 years. Growing out of this articulation initiative, a small work group representing French, German, and Spanish faculty are developing recommendations for a placement exam and broadly accepted student learning expectations for the first year of post-secondary language study. We acknowledge the need to expand the participants to include more secondary schools and more post-secondary faculty.

## UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

The growth of knowledge and the complexity of our global society make the importance of post-secondary experience more critical than ever before. High school completion alone is widely recognized as a partial, but generally insufficient step toward a rewarding career, and as an informed and effective participant in our democracy. Awareness of the differences between high school and college expectations is a well-documented component creating successful post-secondary experiences, particularly for those students who have limited access to college experience mentoring. This is particularly critical in Wyoming, where approximately one-fourth of residents age 25 and older have bachelor's degrees. Acknowledging the need for this understanding, the P-16 Council initiated development of charts comparing and contrasting the differences in instructional features for high school and college-level courses. Charts for mathematics, science, social studies, world languages and writing courses have been produced jointly by secondary and post-secondary faculty, with support from the Wyoming State Scholars Initiative and Wyoming School-University Partnership.

Differences in class sessions, out of class preparation, textbooks and grading are among those outlined for each subject. These charts have been provided schools across the State and are now accessible on the P-16 Council Web site ([www.wy-16.org/Projects.asp#PastProjects](http://www.wy-16.org/Projects.asp#PastProjects)).

## NGA COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM

The Wyoming State Board of Education (SBE) approved adoption of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) for English language-arts and mathematics in June 2010. The common core standards are the product of a State-led initiative coordinated by the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers following extensive input from content experts, teachers, school administrators, and parents from 48 States, two territories and the District of Columbia. These common education standards for K-12 build on the individual States standards by providing a consistent set of goals and expectations across the States. The adopted mathematics and language-arts Common Core standards are founded on rigorous content and application of knowledge requiring higher order skills. The Common Core does not tell teachers how to meet the standards as that is best left to local districts. The Wyoming Department of Education coordinated the State's input during development and the subsequent review of the Common Core prior to adoption in June.

The University of Wyoming and Wyoming P-16 Education Council strongly support the Common Core, and provided a recommendation in support of adoption to the Wyoming SBE. Integration of this research-based Common Core with its focus on college and career readiness and the existing Wyoming K-12 standards offers additional potential for increased post-secondary participation and completion.

If the full potential of the Common Core is to be realized, a new generation assessment system is needed to support ongoing improvements in instruction and consider a broad range of student learning outcomes. The Comprehensive Assessment Systems Grant Program, a component of the Race to the Top Fund Assessment Program, recognizes this need and offers States an opportunity to participate in consortia to formulate such an assessment. The University and the P-16 Council are on record in support of the Wyoming Department of Education's application to join the current 31 State SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The University of Wyoming and Council were initially attracted to the key elements and principals for a comprehensive assessment system proposed in the MOU for the States joining the SBAC. These key elements and principles are outlined in the Executive Summary on the SBAC Web site ([www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/Exec\\_Smarter.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/Exec_Smarter.pdf)). The SBAC assessment system calls for strategic use of a variety of item types and performance events to measure the full range of the Common Core and to ensure accurate assessment of all students. The importance of valid assessment of student performance in meeting content standards is obvious. However, the complexity of designing a valid assessment that provides incentives for students, parents, teachers and schools to improve and excel is not. We are eager for an opportunity to participate in the development of a new generation comprehensive assessment as proposed by the SBAC.

## TEACHER PREPARATION

Teacher preparation and evaluation are topics too often receiving negative attention today. While the importance of well-qualified and effective teachers committed to students and learning is inarguable, proposals addressing teacher accountability

more often emphasize punitive actions rather than supportive and developmental actions. Unfortunately punitive measures are occasionally necessary, but are a last resort. The teacher preparation initiatives I outline are not intended to discount the responsibility of instructional faculty at every level, from pre-school through graduate school. It is imperative that they effectively impart new knowledge to their students, but it is not solely the responsibility of the school and the faculty. The role of community is addressed in a subsequent section.

Without delving too deeply into teacher education, I want to highlight three facets of our NCATE accredited College of Education program at the University of Wyoming. Since 2005, every major in secondary education must also complete a concurrent major in a specific discipline. For example, secondary mathematics education majors must complete 47 credit hours in mathematics coursework. The student must receive a grade of C or better in the content coursework. Majors in Art, Agricultural Education, English, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Physics) and Social Studies Education must fulfill this expectation. These concurrent majors provide substantial depth in content for students seeking certification in that area.

A second key element for quality teacher education is an increasing opportunity to work with students in actual public school classrooms to develop the skills necessary to be a highly effective member of the profession. In conjunction with required college coursework, teacher-education program students at UW spend significant time with mentor teachers in their classrooms. In addition, most of our education college faculty have P-12 teaching experience on their resume providing increased credibility in our work with mentor teachers across the State. The increasing exposure to the public school classroom begins during the second year and culminates with a two semester sequence in the senior year. Each graduate completes 16 weeks of full-time field experience in a partner school during the second semester senior year.

Lastly, alternative teacher certification pathways are a topic of interest nationally. We have some concern about alternative certification programs that do not provide substantial instructional interaction with students in school classrooms. With that being said, the University recognizes this need offering a program for students who have already completed a bachelors degree that leads to teacher certification through Wyoming's Professional Teaching Standards Board. The Teacher Certification Program for Post-Baccalaureate Students is not a degree program, but a path to teacher certification. The actual certification courses can be completed over one summer and the following academic year, including the student teaching experience we value. An associated, but separate option with some additional coursework, can lead to the master's degree.

#### ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

If high school reform is to be realized, it is essential that we as a country move beyond the blame game. The community—parents, business owners and employees, government workers, civic leaders, and seniors—can and should all play a role in elevating the importance of an academically strong, effective school system. David Kirp, in the June 14, 2010 issue of *The Nation* outlines a “community school” philosophy using as a model a school in upper Manhattan Island of New York. In his example, parents are involved as learners and teachers, with schools offering medical care and social services in addition to academics. Community groups and businesses are partners with the school and not only provide new funding, but also connect students to the world beyond their school and neighborhood. The traditional school day and year is substantially expanded with programs after school, on weekends and during the summer. While all the elements of this particular model may not be readily transferable, the concept overall is worthy of more widespread consideration.

One advantage of rural schools may be greater feasibility in engaging the community in activities that enhance student achievement in preparation for college and the workforce. While the smaller scale should offer an advantage in terms of involving the community, it also presents a disadvantage in that rural community residents may have less diversity of experience and perspective. On that premise, that P-16 Education Council has debated various approaches to engage individual communities in consensus building dialogue on specific elements of the academic and social skills needed for effective functioning in a global economy. Understanding and implementing best practices in providing college coursework credits for appropriately prepared high school students throughout the State is one example of a project the Council is undertaking with support from the Wyoming Community College Commission. The challenges in reaching broad consensus on a topic such as this are substantial. Most importantly, the process creates opportunity for partici-

pants to listen and learn about different perspectives, values and practices. This is a powerful first step in creating a shared vision for a stronger, more effective educational system.

I thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts and will be pleased to answer any questions.

Senator ENZI. Thank you very much.

Dr. Rose.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES O. ROSE, Ed.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION, CHEYENNE,  
WY**

Mr. ROSE. Thank you, Senator Enzi. I, too, appreciate the opportunity to be heard from. As you know, being in Wyoming, we're oftentimes considered to sort of be an intellectual wasteland, and I believe that we do actually have something to contribute, so it's indeed an honor to be able to contribute to that.

I would like to simply couch my recommendation or my observations and a sort of redefinition of the three R's. Reading, writing, and arithmetic we all are familiar with—I think we need now, as an educational system, to look at relevance, remediation, and resources.

Relevance, I believe it is—and as you have pointed out in your opening remarks—going to become more and more important as the merging of career and post-secondary education take place, so that preparation at the high school level is developed with goals that recognize that no student is going to be adequately prepared with merely a high school education. I think it also needs to be recognized that of the \$772 billion that's spent on education—postsecondary education annually, nearly two-thirds of that number were spent not in traditional institutions of higher education, but by public and private entities, primarily employers. This is an enterprise that in preparing high school students, I think we have to reform. They're not all either going to some sort of formal career technical education, nor are they necessarily going to higher education. They very well may be going into the workforce, but we need to recognize relevance as a primary piece of that.

I would call your attention—and I hope you've had a chance to see this—this is a document published by the Wyoming Department of Education in collaboration with NPR Associates in 2007. It points out, I think, a number of recommendations, two that I would simply call your attention to.

One is the need for relevance through the use of employment of career pathways—identifying for students what their career aspirations are, and finding them a curriculum that is both relevant to those aspirations, has a structure that will help them advance to a point that they can become productive in whatever career they choose.

The other piece I would put forth in terms of relevance is that the actual relevance is not necessarily going to be achieved once students identify their career aspirations. If they're assisted in that by high school counselors, we are dealing with a difficult challenge because even in Wyoming, we have hundreds of students with those. When that relevance is going to be achieved, I believe, is in the classroom. The teacher corps needs to have assistance, professional development opportunities in order to adjust their pedagogy

and make their curriculum relevant, so that students have motivation and engagement in that learning process.

Remediation is one we've already spoken of. The Hathaway Merit Scholarship that we have in this State, still results in one student in seven being required to take a remedial course at the college level before they actually can take credit-bearing, college, transcriptable courses. We think there's a problem in terms of the enrollment of high school curriculum, and as Dr. Abernethy referenced, the common core standards, I believe, are going to help us add rigor to high school work so that there is a correlation between what's taught in high school and what's expected in college. It also applies to career and technical education in all facets of education.

I would just say that, for too long, those of us in post-secondary education have really let curriculum—the whole post-secondary education has been the culprits; it's their fault. I believe that that hasn't taken us very far in terms of improving this situation. What I believe we need to do is, as Rollin has mentioned, we really have to open up communications so that we're speaking about the same issues.

Finally, what I would suggest is an attention to resources. This might be the place where you think I'm going to give you the schpeel about more Federal dollars.

[Laughter.]

That's not my pitch. What I believe we need is a proper and directed use of the resources we already have, and the place we can best do that is to use data to our advantage. It's the data resources we need at least as much as we need fiscal resources.

We are—as again, Rollin has suggested—in the process in this State with the systems that can help us understand what mechanisms are in a high school, secondary level and transform them into a post-secondary or career training level through longitudinal data, data to tell us how individual students perform. I know you've seen references in the Obama administration's proposal of a blueprint for reform to the use of growth models in secondary education, and all of those are components.

I would merely suggest that this is not simply a problem that will be solved by throwing money at it. We just have to do a better job of analyzing what we know now and formalizing it into usable information that will guide all of our efforts.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rose follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES O. (JIM) ROSE, ED.D.

I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to address you this afternoon and provide testimony as you explore the vital and vexing issues of improving our public education system. In the context of today's hearing, I am particularly thankful to be able to provide a perspective from Wyoming and attempt to articulate some of the challenges and opportunities we face as a rural State.

INTRODUCTION

I should say at the outset, there is a limit to my experience with secondary education: my only direct involvement was as a student in Goshen County Schools and graduate of Lingle High School and then as a school board member in Fremont County. Both of those experiences occurred more years ago than I care to admit. All my remaining educational experience stems from nearly 30 years as a professor and administrator in post-secondary education and more recently, as the adminis-

trator of the State system of community colleges. While I have attempted to link what I am about to present to the secondary education system, my familiarity with the challenges faced by today's high schools is dated and derived from indirect involvement.

I believe that some of the important issues in this discussion can be framed by a new definition for the "Three R's". While defining competencies in readin', (w)ritin' and 'rithmetic' holds a central position in modern discussions of education reform, I would suggest three alternative R's to consider if we are to progress to substantive, meaningful improvement:

- RELEVANCE
- REMEDIATION
- RESOURCES

Let me begin with **RELEVANCE**.

#### RELEVANCE

First, a qualifier regarding the scope of how post-secondary education may be related to secondary reform. A study recently published by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce<sup>1</sup> indicates that of the \$772 billion spent annually on post-secondary education, 65 percent of that total is outside the formal post-secondary system. Essentially, nearly two-thirds of post-secondary education is provided by employers, formally or informally, as well as through industry apprenticeships, certifications and public job training. Only slightly more than a third is provided by traditional institutions of higher education, be they public or private.

Given this landscape, what constitutes realistic and effective preparation for post-secondary education by high schools is subject to considerable interpretation depending on the specific route a student may follow. However, I believe it's safe to assert some relevant skills that high school graduates should possess to ensure success irrespective of the post-secondary education path chosen. And to my point, it is equally vital how those skills are perceived and mastered through relevant coursework connected to the interests and aspirations of students.

In 2007, MPR Associates in collaboration with a number of education-related entities produced "New Directions for High School Career and Technical Education in Wyoming: A Strategic Plan."<sup>2</sup> Among the many recommendations this document contains, are two that I believe merit consideration in this discussion. First, the plan recommends that students be guided in exploring and developing their own interests for future careers using the career pathways identified by the U.S. Department of Education and adopted by the Wyoming Department of Education. Providing students with opportunities to relate high school courses to their individual interests and career aspirations enhances student engagement with their studies regardless of whether they intend to pursue a post-secondary degree or begin preparation to enter the workforce. As a corollary to this action, it is recommended that the separation between career and academic courses be deemphasized, since virtually all current data suggest that college and careers require essentially the same preparation at the secondary level. This leads to the second recommendation.

In order to enhance relevance and improve student engagement, as disciplinary divisions and career/academic barriers are dissolved, there must be investment in assisting teachers in the integrative process through professional development. The role of invigorating student engagement cannot practically be left just to career counselors, since by any measure their opportunity to provide career guidance to students is circumscribed by sheer numbers. Even in Wyoming, ratios of several hundred students per counselor preclude such practice. The teaching faculty in many cases provides the only real opportunity for guided career exploration. Effective, engaged learning will require minor refinements for some faculty and major shifts in classroom practice for others. Adjusting pedagogies to facilitate this integration will most certainly require commitment of faculty and administrators at the school level.

As you are aware, the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have recently published their recommendation for common core standards and a number of States, including Wyoming, have adopted them.<sup>3</sup> A rigorous curriculum is certainly one necessary component in the agenda to improve public education in this country, but I believe a singular focus on standards as a panacea without acknowledging the need for curricular integration will allow a watershed opportunity in education to be squandered. More about this in a subsequent section.

*What is Wyoming Doing to Address This Issue?*

One example of an effort in Wyoming to improve student engagement and opportunity is work commissioned by the Wyoming Legislature earlier this year. The Wyoming Post-Secondary Education Options Program (W.S. § 21–20–201) provides an opportunity for high school students to enroll in college courses offered during the normal school day on high school campuses (concurrent enrollment) or outside the school day at other sites or online (dual enrollment). The work being conducted this summer and fall is intended to provide a comprehensive review of this program and gain input from a full spectrum of education stakeholders. The outcome will be enhanced equity and accessibility for students and uniform accountability for the State.

This expansion of course offerings affords students in rural high schools especially, the opportunity to be academically challenged and to explore career interests in spite of the inherent limitations that geography imposes on the breadth of coursework available to small districts.

## REMEDIATION

According to data published last month by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board<sup>4</sup> nearly 60 percent of first-year college students who are fully eligible to attend college must take at least one remedial course. Estimates of the Bill and Melinda Gate's Foundation's Strong American Schools estimates that this remedial education costs students and States up to \$2.3 billion annually.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the fiscal toll, the likelihood that a student will complete a bachelor's degree if required to complete even just one remedial reading course is only 17 percent; for a math course, it is 27 percent.<sup>6</sup>

In Wyoming, the picture is not quite so bleak, but there is still reason for concern. In data collected in 2008/2009 for the Hathaway Scholarship Program, nearly 15 percent of scholarship recipients were required to take at least one remedial class. Since the Hathaway Program is a *merit* scholarship program, the fact that more than one scholarship student in seven must take at least one remedial class suggests there is still need for improvement.<sup>7</sup>

For too long, those of us in post-secondary education have looked critically upon our secondary peers and intimated that the preparation problem is solely in the purview of K–12 education. We have resisted any suggestion that we are at all culpable for this disconnect between what high school students receive and higher education demands. Fortunately, there is growing recognition that secondary and post-secondary education must work in tandem if lasting, substantive improvement is to be achieved.

*What is Wyoming Doing to Address This Issue?*

The Wyoming Community College Commission, the Wyoming Department of Education, school districts and the University of Wyoming are currently considering joining with over 30 other States in a consortium designed to develop a common assessment instrument. This test will be used to evaluate student progress and mastery of the common core standards referenced above.

More specifically, the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium<sup>8</sup> seeks to develop a common assessment system, used in grades 3–8 and 11. The exam given in the junior year will allow for addressing any deficiencies during the remaining year of high school. For their part, post-secondary institutions who participate in the consortium agree to accept the results of the assessment to determine placement in college coursework. No longer will separate placement exams be used by member colleges and universities as part of the matriculation process.

Thirty-one States have signed on and agreed to adopt a single, summative assessment exam that will allow schools to evaluate students using the same test that will be employed by post-secondary institutions.

## RESOURCES

In spite of what you may be thinking—here comes the pitch for more dollars—my choice of resources as the third “R” has less to do with the amount of funding and more to do with how resources are employed to achieve the most benefit for our entire education system.

By almost any measure, Wyoming has been blessed recently with extraordinary fiscal resources to support public education at all levels. For example:

- Our K–12 system is among the highest funded systems per capita in the country, with nearly \$1.5 billion appropriated for the current biennium.<sup>9</sup>

- Public support of our post-secondary system, (UW and the seven community colleges) in terms of \$/FTE is the highest in the Nation. Total revenue per FTE in 2009 was \$17,460, while the U.S. average was \$10,998.<sup>10</sup>
- When represented as a percentage of public higher education revenue, Wyoming has the lowest net tuition of all the States.<sup>10</sup>

I would submit that ours is not a challenge of resource quantity, but rather of how the abundance that we have can best be invested to create opportunities leading to fulfilling, productive lives. Perhaps the most important component in evaluating the efficacy of how resources are applied in pursuit of these goals is comprehensive, current data.

Innovative new approaches to addressing present and current challenges in education will only be effective if it is possible to establish objectives and metrics by which success is to be measured and achievement established. Data are the *sin qua non* to this process. Without a comprehensive, longitudinal data capacity, we will continue to resort to speculation and inference rather than accurately and equitably assessing our performance. There are, of course, concerns of individual privacy which must and can be addressed, but no longer can we afford to merely employ anecdotal evidence as a proxy for assessing performance.

#### *What is Wyoming Doing to Address This Issue?*

The Wyoming Community College Commission Statewide Strategic Plan was completed early this year, presented to policymakers for consideration, and approved as the guiding document for the future of Wyoming's community college system.<sup>11</sup> A product of 3 years of study, first by a governor-appointed commission and then a legislative task force, the plan sets out ambitious goals for continuing to strengthen linkages between the K-12 system and the seven community colleges.

The plan also mandates continued collaboration among all education sectors as an essential for continued progress. Partnerships with workforce services and other human service agencies continue to provide new avenues to jointly address the education and training needs of Wyoming citizens. For example, the community colleges and the Department of Workforce Services have recently cooperated in deploying the Career Readiness Certificate, providing a nationally recognized credential to assist employers in the hiring process and giving job seekers a means to quantify their proficiency in applied mathematics, reading for information and locating information.

#### CONCLUSION

Relevance, remediation and resources—three components that I believe merit examination for the role they can play in reforming our secondary education system. Relevance, achieved through integration of career and academic pathways into the learning process and professional development opportunities to enhance educational practice. A reduced need for remediation through better alignment of secondary and post-secondary curriculum and the employment of common assessment instruments. And effective application of resources through more comprehensive and effective use of data to improve our understanding and guide our decisions. I believe that by attending to these three areas, we can achieve higher levels of success for all students and ensure a brighter future for all of Wyoming and the Nation.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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2. *Common Core State Standards Initiative*; Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association, June 2010. [<http://corestandards.org>]
3. *New Directions for High School Career and Technical Education in Wyoming: A Strategic Plan*; Hoachlander, Gary; Klein, Steven and Studier, Carol; MPR Associates, May 2007.
4. *Beyond the Rhetoric: Improving College Readiness Through Coherent State Policy*; The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board, June 2010.
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8. *The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium*; State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, June 2010. [<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER>]

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10. *State Higher Education Finance: FY 2009*; State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2010.

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Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell.

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN MITCHELL, SUPERINTENDENT, PARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1, POWELL, WY**

Mr. MITCHELL. Good afternoon. Senator Enzi, thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing today. It is an honor to represent our school district and the rural school districts in Wyoming and across the Nation.

Our school district is comprised of four elementary schools, one middle school, one comprehensive high school and one small alternative high school. We serve about 1,600 students in 1,458 square miles. Powell, a community of 5,000, has a tradition of educational excellence, but we also understand the need to make sure we continually strive to improve our efforts to provide the quality of education our students deserve.

In following with this tradition, recently our Board of Trustees has adopted a strategic plan to guide the School District in continuous school improvement. I have provided a copy of our strategic plan. I'll speak briefly about just one of the goals—we have three goals—but our main academic goal is that we will increase student achievement by ensuring that all students will be prepared for Algebra I by the end of 8th grade; ensure that, at the end of 3rd grade and all subsequent years thereafter, students will be reading on grade level; and we'll attempt to attain 100 percent graduation rate.

As you can see, the student achievement goals are very bold; however we believe we can reach our goals with the support of our stakeholders. We can't do it alone, it's not necessarily our teachers' responsibility.

High School Reform, we really don't call it high school reform, but that was the title of some of the topics as we were preparing for this, we call it Continuous School Improvement. Some of the efforts that we have attempted during my short tenure at Powell and certainly prior to my tenure was working effectively with our high school staff and our community to provide opportunities for our students. We offer a strong curriculum of core academic classes, supplemented by the traditional high school offerings.

We also partner with Northwest College to offer dual and concurrent enrollment classes to our high school students and we have recently started having articulation agreements and discussions with faculty at Northwest College, which is located in our community. It's a small step, but it will prove advantageous for our students.

We have initiated several strategies in the recent years to decrease our drop-out rate. One of those is, we have developed academies at each grade level: 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade. The academy concept, briefly, is that breaking our high

school down into smaller groups with similar teachers teaching similar students and then, not only that, small groups of students meet regularly with one teacher, which is their advisor, talking about their academic progress and their needs and wants as a student, and also rescheduling—working 2 years, our high school schedule allows those teachers to periodically have common planning time so that they can meet to talk about student data as it relates to student achievement.

We also developed a project-based learning environment, which not only covers core academic standards, but also allows students to work together as a team for a common goal, which embedded in that are career skills. Also it's mandatory that each of those projects are integrated with the use of modern technology.

We offer a strong school-to-work program for students that, in their junior and senior years, have the ability to take some time out of school and work at one of the local businesses. We also have a job shadow component related to that, and recently, in the last 2 years, we have implemented the Reconnecting Youth program which is showing very good results in its first 2 years.

A variety of at-risk programs have been added to Powell High School. In particular, we have after-school programming every day, provided by tutors—high school students, that are tutors that we pay to tutor our at-risk students with an academic advisor—we're seeing that. Last year we started the Lunch Intervention Program, commonly known as the LIP program. This is a program during lunch period where, if a student is missing an assignment, they have to go to the library with their lunch and stay there until they get that assignment turned in. Mixed results. It's 3 years we've been doing it at the middle school, and our D/F list has decreased dramatically with the Lunch Intervention Program there.

We offer summer school at all of our schools, most recently, just this summer, we adopted a project-based summer school at the high school. That project was focused on Roundup Ready Beets. All the students had to do some type of project on Roundup Ready Beets. I'm not sure if you're aware of that, but it's a big deal in Powell, we can grow a lot of beets in our country.

[Laughter.]

The Federal Government's involvement there sometimes slows that down.

[Laughter.]

Each one of the students had to present to the public—and it was open to the community. It was quite an event, and not only the students are still enthused about what they've learned about Roundup Ready Beets, the audience themselves, quite a few farmers showed up to know what the students knew about what they were growing on their farms, and were quite impressed with the knowledge that the students had gained.

Our small alternative high school is called the Shoshone Learning Center, it's all online. We require all of our classes through BYU, and Powell High School students also attend that center. They do credit recovery there in the summer, that was our traditional summer school until this year, but they bounce back and forth depending on some of the class offerings that they can't get or a class scheduling conflict. If the student wants to take band for

4 years, it's hard for them to get all of that in, so they might have to go to the Shoshone Learning Center for a Latin class or something that they want for an elective.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mitchell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEVIN MITCHELL

SUMMARY

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi and members of the committee. My name is Kevin Mitchell and I am the superintendent of schools in Park County School District #1 (PCSD#1) in Powell, WY. Thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing today. It is an honor to represent our school district and the rural school districts in Wyoming and across the Nation.

PCSD#1 has developed a strategic planning effort to provide continuous school improvement for each school that is tied to the district student achievement goals. A copy of the plan is included with my written testimony.

Powell High School has implemented or is in the process of implementing programs to improve student achievement. Grade level academies, after-school programs, common planning time, project-based summer school, school-to-work program, and dual and concurrent enrollment classes with the local junior college are some of the programs being offered to support our efforts to increase student achievement.

The reauthorization of ESEA should include a strong emphasis on professional development for high school teachers and principals. A focus on a strong academic core of reading, writing and mathematics should be provided to each high school student. All other curriculum offerings should be decided by the local Board of Trustees. A system of support should be implemented rather than a system of compliance. Increase the funds for IDEA and Title I to meet the needs of our students with disabilities and those in poverty. The Department of Education could assist districts and other agencies to develop a collaborative model such as "Ready by 21" to meet the needs of our youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon Chairman Harkin, Senator Enzi and members of the committee. My name is Kevin Mitchell and I am the superintendent of schools in Park County School District #1 (PCSD#1) in Powell, WY. Thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing today. It is an honor to represent our school district and the rural school districts in Wyoming and across the Nation.

Our school district is comprised of four elementary schools, one middle school, one comprehensive high school and one small alternative high school. We serve about 1,600 students in an area of 1,458 square miles. Powell has a tradition of educational excellence, but we also understand the need to make sure we continually strive to improve our efforts to provide the quality of education our students deserve. The Board of Trustees has adopted a strategic planning process that guides the efforts for continuous school improvement. A copy of the strategic plan placemat is attached with this report. The goals of the strategic plan are:

**Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement**

- a. Ensure that all students will be prepared for Algebra I by the end of 8th grade.
- b. Ensure that, at the end of 3d grade and all subsequent years thereafter, students will be reading on grade level.
- c. Attain 100 percent graduation rate.

**Goal 2: Ensure Effective and Efficient Operations**

- a. Develop a systematic approach to identify and evaluate the operational processes of the district.

**Goal 3: Strategic Communications With Stakeholders**

- a. Implement a district-wide communication plan.

As you can see, the student achievement goals are very bold; however we believe we can reach our goals with the support of our stakeholders. A detailed plan on the actions needed to achieve the goals has been developed to guide our work.

## HIGH SCHOOL REFORM

Powell High School (PHS) offers a strong curriculum of core academic classes, supplemented with art, music, health and physical education and career and technical education class offerings. There are many other elective classes offered also that include AP classes. We have a partnership with Northwest College to offer dual and concurrent enrollment classes to our high school students.

Powell High School has adopted or is in the process of initiating strategies to ensure that our graduates are prepared for college or a career. Grade level academies have been established to provide opportunities for small groups of teachers to develop relationships with students. Many high school dropouts didn't have a personal connection with anyone in the school. Each teacher is assigned a small group of students to meet with to discuss their academic progress and assist the students with any problems they might have. The academies also allow the teachers a common planning time to discuss student achievement data to monitor student achievement.

PHS is also in the process of developing a project-based approach as an instructional strategy. This strategy develops skills that students need to work together for a common goal. Standards in more than one curricular area may be addressed along with career skills in one assigned project guided by at least two teachers. The integration of technology is mandatory in all of the project-based classes.

Powell High School also offers a strong school to work program. This program allows students time to work in local businesses. This program is coupled with a job shadowing program. These programs offer students an opportunity to develop job-related skills and to also determine if they want to pursue a specific career. PHS implemented the Reconnecting Youth program 2 years ago to address identified at-risk students that have poor attendance and are not on track to graduate. The initial results of this program are positive.

PHS also has a variety of programs to offer at-risk students. An after-school program, partially staffed by student tutors has been very successful in assisting students in need of academic assistance. A Lunch Intervention Program (LIP) was established this year for students that are failing a class. The students are assigned to eat lunch in the media center where they complete missing or incomplete assignments with the assistance of a tutor. A project-based summer school was added this year. Students failing reading and/or math were invited to summer school where they completed a project of local interest, "Roundup Ready Beets." The students researched the controversy over "Roundup Ready Beets." They had to meet the standards in math, reading and writing in the project. They presented their projects to the public at the conclusion of summer school. PHS received very positive remarks from the students and the public that attended the presentations.

The Shoshone Learning Center is our alternative high school. The center serves as an alternative setting for students that have dropped out of high school or do not meet the norms of PHS. The center delivers the curriculum via distance education. The center is staffed by a teacher, a para-educator, a part-time principal and an administrative assistant. The center is also used by PHS students that want to take a class that is not offered at the high school or to complete a credit recovery class. The Shoshone Learning Center had a graduating class of 13 students that may not have graduated without this opportunity.

Most of these programs mentioned above are either fully or partially funded using Federal funds we receive from consolidated grants. Title I, neglected and delinquent, special education and general funds are allocated to provide these programs for our students.

## OPPORTUNITIES DURING THE REAUTHORIZATION OF ESEA

The reauthorization of ESEA is very important, especially to rural school districts and particularly to rural high school reform. Secondary schools can be resistant to embrace change. The Federal Government could assist local school districts in high school reform by providing support to teachers and principals in the following areas:

1. Professional development in identifying the needs of high school students and how to make sure all students have a personal connection to the school.

2. All students must complete a rigorous core curriculum of reading, writing and mathematics. All students must be prepared for college in these three areas. One assessment could be developed to measure a student's skills and knowledge in these areas. Even the so called "vocational professions" such as plumbers and electricians need these skills to complete the training necessary for their chosen profession. This curriculum should certainly be supplemented by the sciences, history, music, art, drama, foreign language, health and physical education, technology and the list goes on. However, all students in a rural area must be equipped with these college ready skills. This practice would eliminate the need for remediation classes at the college

level. Students and their parents are not making the appropriate class choices to insure they are college ready. We must make these choices for them. Small rural high schools cannot offer a large offering of curricular choices to students, but they can all offer this rigorous core curriculum. You never know when a person may choose to attend college after years of not needing or choosing to attend college. ESEA should support the efforts of this core curriculum such as the recently released common core standards and leave the rest of the curriculum choices to the local Board of Trustees.

3. IDEA and title I funds are critical for school districts. These grants should remain formula-driven and not be turned into competitive grants where small rural districts are at a disadvantage to compete for these funds. At-risk students live in all corners of the Nation and funding for children of poverty or special needs should not be determined by how well a grant application was written. Increasing funding for IDEA and adding title I funds specifically for high schools would assist rural districts in meeting the needs of our students in poverty and our low performing schools.

4. The Department of Education could offer more regionally located professional development opportunities in rural areas. This would provide better customer service for our students. Attending very expensive conferences in large cities shouldn't be the only offerings to see how model schools improve student achievement. Referring someone to a link on a Web site is not customer service. The development of personal relationships with the Department of Education, the State Department of Education and the local districts would be most helpful and could be accomplished by face-to-face interactions.

5. The development of effective high school principals must be a priority. I believe the high school principal has the most difficult job in education today. They need quality professional development and support from the local district and from the State and Federal levels. Professional development offered regionally by the Department of Education or in partnership with a local university is much-needed. Providing real examples of education reform that increases student achievement that includes a plan for implementation, followed by on-site coaching during the implementation phase would be very effective in assisting principals with education reform at the high school level.

6. Moving to a customer service model versus a compliance model would be most helpful. Firing a principal and half of the staff of a 200-student high school in rural America will not provide the change expected. In fact, that would be a tragedy in a small rural community.

7. Assist districts in developing partnerships with local stakeholders in educating our youth. Programs such as "Ready by 21" could be developed in most communities with the assistance of the Federal Government and could be funded as a part of ESEA. This would include educational agencies from preschool to graduate school. A collaborative model for educational agencies to work together for the common good is needed. It is too easy to point the finger at someone else for not doing their job. Joining them in the work to develop a better understanding of the barriers to success would actually benefit our students.

Educators are not afraid of accountability. We certainly aren't in Park 1. There does need to be a realization that there are too many students that aren't ready to attend school or do not receive any support outside of the school setting to become career- or college-ready.

Thank you again for offering me this opportunity to share my comments with you. I would answer any questions that you might have for me.

Senator ENZI. Thank you.  
Dr. Velle.

**STATEMENT OF VERLYN VELLE, Ed.D., COORDINATOR OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, CAMPBELL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT, GILLETTE, WY**

Ms. VELLE. Senator Enzi, members of the panel, and audience. I am thrilled to hear that Paul was doing some career academies, because that's what I'm going to be talking about. I was asked to talk about the concept that we have begun at Campbell County High School, and it has mostly to do with career academies.

Career academies may or may not be quite what we're talking about, but in most career academies—well, in Wyoming, first of all,

most of our schools are really small. What happens in a really small school is that these great relationships are formed between parents and the school, and the teachers and the administrators and everybody. You know, one of the students is missing, all of the teachers know it, and they call Mom and Dad and they try to find out why the student was missing and that sort of thing.

What we have done is try to focus on some careers and I want you to know that we've made some major mistakes. It's a very slow process, and we've been learning all the way along.

Most career academies—this is an old concept that was developed in Philadelphia about 40 years ago, but it's kind of new to Wyoming. What happens in our academies is that we try to keep the students together for at least 2 years. If they can stay together for 3 years, it would be great. We have two different campuses, so it's a little farther, but they stay together, and we try to keep them with the same teachers, as well.

One of the things that we found out from trying to do career academies is that there's a lot of data that's been collected, nationwide. The data has really supported our interest in doing career academies.

For instance, in California, the students have 10 percent higher graduation rate if they're in an academy. Now, there are lots of different ways that you can do research, and everybody knows that, and data can be used for all different kinds of things. What we found in nationwide kinds of research is that students graduated at a higher rate; less drop-outs, then, of course. They have better academic entrance into college, or into a job, they have—this seems very strange, I'm sure—but they have been shown to have a better family life, and have kept their jobs longer. There are all kinds of research that we could go into.

The National Coalition on Career Academies says that there are a number of things that you should focus on in a career academy. That is, first of all, your focus should be on both college and careers. We should raise student aspirations and commitment. And that we should increase student achievement. Those are the things that we are hoping to do.

Since our high school is about, almost 1,400 students, it doesn't have that same, small—like my high school has 250 students, so every student knows every student, and every teacher knows every student. During the school day, you have 1,400 students, you have what are called growth students, and those are the students that get lost. They are doing something that pulls them in.

What we did in Campbell County is, we started out by taking people to see academies that worked well. So, we went to California, we went to Florida, and we visited Palm Beach, FL, where that school district has over 100 career academies in 98 high schools. We took the school board, members of the school board, we took administrators, we took teachers. It has been very clear to us that, unless you see it, you don't believe it. It was always a good thing to take people to see these career academies.

Once they see that and listen to the students talk about what they've learned, how they've been a part of something, all of those relationships that they've formed, then that's when they become believers.

I too, am really interested in the—we call them the Four R’s—not reading, ‘rithmetic’, that kind of thing—the Four R’s that we talk about in our career academies are our rigor, relevance, relationships, and the last one is reflection—you’ve got to think about what you have learned.

We have, right now, three academies, two of them are going to start in the fall. Our first one was an “Energy Academy.” Obviously, if you’re going to do a career academy, you have to take what’s happening in the community into—that’s got to be the main focus. We’ve got an Energy Academy, great. What happened was, that there was an effort in a CTE program. What we found with our career academies that they have to be anchored in CTE.

Senator ENZI. CTE is?

Ms. VELLE. Career Technical Education.

Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Ms. VELLE. Our next academies Hospitality and Tourism which includes culinary arts, and transportation, and transportation technology, and that includes the whole energy theme, as well, because we have the solar and water technology and all of that sort of thing.

We start with sophomore, we get a small group of sophomores, and each year we add some more sophomores. Hopefully when these students get to be seniors, there will be about 150 of them in an academy.

Now, nationwide statistics say that anything under 500 is a smaller community, but for us, that’s pretty high. We’re trying to get about 150 in each one of these.

These are things that have to be revisited all of the time. My time is up, so I will stop there.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Velle follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VERLYN VELLE, ED.D.

SUMMARY

*Restructuring Rural High Schools—A Career Academy Concept*

Why do we need to change? Albert Einstein once said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” Career academies provide change in student interest in school, an increase in a sense of belonging and improved attendance and graduation rates. Career Academies reduce drop-out rates and better prepare students to succeed into adulthood. And they increase student achievement through relationships.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CAREER ACADEMIES (NATIONAL CAREER ACADEMY COALITION)

When career academy students are compared to non-academy students in the very same high school we find that academy students nationally:

- earn more credits upon high school graduation (8 percent–15 percent more);
- graduation rate is considerably higher (CA. 10 percent higher);
- drop out of school at a lower rate (7.3 percent–14.6 percent lower);
- enroll in post-secondary education at a higher rate (62 percent vs. 47 percent);
- matriculate from 2-year and 4-year colleges at a higher rate (52 percent vs. 36 percent);
- report lower remediation rate than the national average (8 percent vs. 20 percent);
- earned higher hourly wages, worked more hours per week, had more months of employment and earned about 10 percent more per month;
- pass State exams at a higher rate (language arts 84 percent vs. 76 percent; math 80 percent vs. 74 percent); and
- meet college entrance course requirements at a higher rate (50 percent vs. 39 percent).

In Campbell County School District, we have not had career academies long enough to have had any students graduate, however, we now have a class of 27 seniors, who are completely dedicated to the Career Academy concept, as well as 47 juniors in the Energy Academy. We will start two additional career academies this fall in the areas of Transportation Technology and Hospitality and Tourism. We have learned much along the way, especially in the areas of communication concerning career academies and support of the concept from some administrators and teachers. We do have very strong support from parents and the community as a whole, generally expressing a desire to have more career academies added to the high school.

Because of the sequence of courses required in Career and Technical Education at Campbell County High School, students are really enrolled in a career academy of sorts, only lacking the core academic teacher involvement and integration. These areas include: Agriculture; Project Lead The Way (pre-engineering), Business and Finance and Television, Broadcasting and Animation Production and Careers, and generally involve at least 2 years with the same group of students. Emphasis is on the "Four R's—Rigor, Relevance, Relationships and Reflection".

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The "Small Learning Community" concept is probably the most common model for high schools in Wyoming, many of them having less than 500 students. In that model there is a strong relationship between the teachers and the students, the administration and the teachers and the students, and between the school and the community. When schools begin having a student enrollment of over a thousand, those relationships are generally not as strong or supportive and many students get lost simply because of the size of the school. Campbell County High School is not a typical rural school because it has a student population of approximately 1,400. This large number of students has led to a fairly high dropout rate and a graduation rate that is lower than desired. With those opportunities in mind, the Campbell County Board of Education members, the Superintendent, several administrators, career and technical education and core academic teachers and community leaders began looking at a model that would benefit the students in preparing them for careers and for college and as a side benefit, for the community to address workforce needs. That model is a type of "Small Learning Community" the career academy concept.

#### WHAT IS A CAREER ACADEMY?

The concept of career academies originated 40 years ago to address academic rigor, relevance of instruction and to build strong and supportive relationships between students and adults. The success of career academies over the years has been attributed to their dual objective of college and career preparation, the broad cross section of students they serve, as well as paying close attention to data and research. Students who participate in academies are engaged in a significant way, as academies support the students' positive motivations. Understanding the student's motivations or career goals have helped engage students in a significant way. We also know that career academies within small learning communities foster accountability at every level.

A career academy is generally comprised of a group of students that takes classes together for at least 2 years and has a team of both career technical education teachers and core academic teachers who stay with that group as much as possible. Career academies generally have a career theme that helps students to see the relationship between what they are learning in their academic subjects and the application to real world work, which get to the question of "why do I have to learn this?" before the student asks. They also help to develop partnerships with employers, the community and the local community college. Students have the opportunity to get real world work-based learning through mentorships (unpaid), internships (paid), on-the-job training, job shadowing and school-based enterprises, such as Cafe' Latte' and Camel Cafe', both within junior high and high school culinary arts classes.

The National Standards of Practice for Career Academies recommends that every career academy has a written definition of its mission and goals. These should be available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board and others involved in the academy. These include at least the following:

- a A focus on college and career. Academies enable students to complete college entrance academic requirements while exposing them to a vertical segment of the occupations within a career field, encouraging them to aim as high as they wish.

b Raise student aspirations and commitment. An academy seeks to increase the level of the students' motivation while in high school. The biggest limiting factor in many youths future plans is not their ability, but where they set their sights.

c Increase student achievement. An academy provides support to its students to increase their achievement in high school. This comes through close relationships with teachers and fellow students, rigorous and relevant curriculum and exposure to career and educational options outside the high school.

#### SOME RESEARCH ABOUT CAREER ACADEMIES

Research tells us that students who are involved in a career pathway or a career academy stay in school, graduate at a higher rate, get better grades, do better and stay longer in college or career academies and strangely enough, have been reported to establish more fulfilling homes and families. (David Stern, Charles Dayton, and Marilyn Raby. February 2010, "Career Academies: A Proven Strategy to Prepare High School Students for College and Careers").

#### HISTORY OF CAREER ACADEMIES IN CAMPBELL COUNTY

Campbell County School District began using a structure that involved four Career Pathways in the mid-1990s when "School to Careers" was a major focus of the Federal legislature. An emphasis was placed on giving students a better understanding of how their likes and dislikes should play into selecting a career. This allowed students the opportunity to learn about the career options available for them. Grant money was used to establish career centers, employ career-center directors and assist students in a comprehensive K-16 program of study or individual 4- or 5-year career plan. The four career pathways that were developed at that time—validated by local industry—have remained a viable vehicle for assisting students to get into classes that will enhance their career or higher education choices. Although students were provided with the opportunity to visit the career centers and take an "Individualized Interest Inventory" to help them select some career options and one of the four pathways, there is a gap between the student knowledge of the career pathways and the teachers interest in learning about them. Because change is so hard, many teachers simply rely on the old adage that "this too shall pass!". Change is difficult, and can be very challenging, but it is time to embrace changes that will advance the educational opportunities of our youth!

There is a story about an engineer, a doctor and a teacher who lived 100 years ago and came back to see what the world was like today. Both the engineer and the doctor could hardly recognize anything that had to do with their chosen career; buildings, bridges and hospitals had changed tremendously. However, the teacher could easily identify the schools and the classrooms. Teachers were still in their own individual classrooms, teaching by themselves and most of the buildings still looked the same on the outside. Fortunately, the technology used within the classrooms has improved.

#### WHAT STEPS HAS CAMPBELL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TAKEN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AND IMPLEMENT CAREER ACADEMIES?

It has become glaringly obvious to those of us supporting the career academy concept that one must "see it to believe it!". With that in mind several groups had the opportunity to visit school districts with successful career academies, beginning with the members of the Board of Education and the Superintendent. The next opportunity was for other administrators and counselors along with interested instructors to do some career academy site visits. Some of the schools/school districts visited were in Bakersfield, CA, because of their emphasis on energy-related areas, Palm Beach School District in Florida (over 100 career academies in 98 high schools), San Diego City schools, wall-to-wall career academies, Junction City, KS, EVIT Culinary Academy in Phoenix, AZ, four career academy schools in Brooklyn, NY and most recently, a group of the Hospitality and Tourism Advisory Board members from Gillette visited Mt. Diablo Culinary Academy in Napa, CA. Once participants have had the opportunity to watch the operation of a career academy and to speak with the students, they become totally supportive and aware of the benefits being in a career academy has on student achievement and outcomes.

Another step taken to increase awareness of the benefits of career academies was to hold large community dinners with guest speakers from the Career Academy world. Three such dinners have been held, supported by the Board of Cooperative Higher Education Services. The first speaker was Deb Mills, from The Center for Occupational Research and Development in Waco, TX. The second guest speaker was Dr. Ken Grey, author of "Other Ways to Win" and the third was Ms. Connie Scotchel-Gross, Career Technical Education director for all the career academy

schools in Palm Beach County, FL. These dinners included parents, community members from business and industry, administrators, school board members, students, counselors and other interested persons. Since that time other experts have been brought into the school district to train interdisciplinary teams of teachers in the areas of Integration of Career and Technical Education with Core Academics, Project-based Teaching and Learning and Reforming Education Through Smaller Learning Communities.

The Wyoming Department of Education, Career and Technical Education Unit, has been invaluable in helping to promote the career academy concept in Wyoming. They were responsible for funding three Demonstration Site Grants, one of which Campbell County School District received to establish an “Academy of Hospitality and Tourism”. They also sponsored a State-wide career academy conference in March, 2010, and invited a Career Academy guru to be the keynote speaker for the Wyoming Association for Career and Technical Education Conference in Buffalo, Wyoming in June of this year. The speaker, Dr. Valerie Jones, Assistant Principal from Braden River High School in Bradenton, FL was successful in structuring a new high school into three career academy pathways. In 3 years she attained cooperation from all parties and the school was such a hit that there is a waiting list to get in. Dr. Jones was asked to repeat her achievement in a tougher 70 percent title I environment. She was given just a year to come into a traditional high school, win support of councilors, teachers and administrators, train them all and work through the class schedules. How’s she doing? “Right on Track” **The secret of her success is that every teacher, counselor, administrator and student is aware of and involved with one of the Career Academy/Pathways.** Braden River uses only three pathways. Our four pathways are well established and could possibly present a workable structural option for Campbell County High School. The mantra is: “if it is good enough for some students—why not for all students?”.

#### WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

**First, change is REALLY hard and second, there must be a Career and Technical Education sequence of courses available for the academy students.**

The first career academy that was started at Campbell County High School was an “Energy Academy”, which had all the major components of an academy except for CTE classes on which to base student career choice. So, students wanted to be in the academy for the relationship part of the academy, but were scattered as to their career goals. Students wanted to be doctors, architects, cosmetologists, engineers, everything but energy-related kinds of careers. Because of that, nearly half of the 50 beginning academy students opted out of the academy the second year as they all needed different math classes, different science classes and wanted to take AP and college classes, which weren’t built into the Energy Academy. The good news was that not one of the Energy Academy students dropped out of school.

There was a very strong group of academy ambassadors from the first year who went to the Junior High schools to recruit the students for the second year of the Energy Academy. Because of the interest and enthusiasm of the ambassadors, 50 ninth grade students signed up for the Energy Academy year 2. We are starting year 3 of the Energy Academy now in the fall with 27 seniors and 47 juniors. Most of these students have had the same core academic teachers for 2 years, but have only worked with a team including career and technical education teachers for one or two projects. This career academy will be continued until these students graduate in 2 more years.

It was then decided to morph the Energy Academy into a Transportation Technology Academy, or perhaps, an Energy/Transportation Academy for students with a clear career goal in the transportation field. They will be taking a sequence of auto tech courses from Campbell County High School and their capstone courses in Diesel Technology from Gillette College. The career technical education teachers have been meeting with the core academic teachers this summer to prepare the curriculum for next year. So there will be an English teacher, a math teacher, a science teacher and two auto tech teachers working together for the Transportation Technology Academy team.

The third career academy is the Hospitality and Tourism academy which is one of the outcomes of the Department of Education Demonstration Site grant. Again there is a team of core academic teachers, culinary arts teachers and marketing teachers who will be working with the students beginning as sophomores this fall. As soon as the academy students are ready, they will be able to go to the Gillette College Tech Center state-of-the-art culinary kitchen and ultimately will serve meals in the dining room there.

Assisting in student knowledge and interest in career academies are two opportunities for students to enroll in specialized career classes at the ninth grade level. Sage Valley Junior High has a class called "Cruising to Careers" co-taught by a Family and Consumer Science Teacher and a Business Education Teacher. And Twin Spruce Junior High has a class called, "The Real Game", also taught by a Family and Consumer Science Teacher.

#### MORE THINGS WE HAVE LEARNED

Each Career Academy must have an advisory board made up of local business and industry representatives. These members can provide job shadow and field trip sites, help with curriculum issues, act as guest instructors, help with activities such as the academy picnic, provide mentorship and internship sites and much more.

Both junior high and high school counselors must be on board with the career academy concept, because they are key to placing students in the appropriate majors and elective classes. Counselors must be very careful to assign a broad spectrum of students in the career academies and not emphasize the benefits to only "at-risk" students.

Unfortunately, scheduling Small Learning Communities within a larger high school configuration can be a nightmare. Career academy students generally must be hand-scheduled, because of the sequence of courses required and the desire to keep all career academy students together for 2 years as much as possible.

Intensive conversation and professional development is extremely necessary to assure that all teachers, students, administrators, counselors and parents are aware of the value of career academies for student success.

Without clear direction for change from the Superintendent and the Board of Education to be carried out by the high school principals, with support of the other district administrators, the likelihood of success is limited.

The schools that we have visited with career academies generally have an administrator, a counselor and a director or lead teacher assigned to each academy or pathway.

As much as possible, the career academies should be physically close to each other, such as one academy upstairs and one downstairs or one per hallway. This requires the breaking up of departments causing much teacher stress.

Students should be allowed to change academies, only after they have completed a school year in the one that they selected first.

Whenever possible, teams of teachers should have a common planning time during the school day and should be allowed to spend professional development time in designing interdisciplinary projects and curriculum.

It is helpful to have the Career Center Directors work closely with counselors, especially those assigned to the ninth grade, to assist students in selecting their majors. They will also work with teachers, providing information and professional development around the career pathway/academy concept.

It is very difficult to have career academies in the truest sense of the word when you have a two-campus model. One campus for sophomores and another for juniors and seniors, because the students have a hard time staying with the same teacher for more than 1 year.

#### CONCLUSION

We know that we are losing students! No matter what the number, to lose even one student is problematic and not acceptable. Establishing our "career academies or small learning communities" we have learned much the first couple of years and will probably do even more "tweaking". But schools where the pathway or academy system is well-established have found considerable success, which is the goal in Campbell County School District.

Senator ENZI. You're all being very punctual, we appreciate that.  
Mr. Jensen.

#### **STATEMENT OF BRANDON JENSEN, PRINCIPAL, CODY HIGH SCHOOL, CODY, WY**

Mr. JENSEN. Senator Enzi, I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and to be representing Cody High School. I'm kind of the hands-on administrator, if you will, I guess I'm the lowest on the totem pole as I sit and look at everybody here.

I'm very proud to be part of Cody High School and some of the things we are doing there. I was asked to talk about how high schools are talking about diversity in needs, and to talk about some of the things that we're doing at Cody High School that are making a positive impact on the lives of our students, especially in their achievement, their education.

Just to let you know, Cody High School has about 680 students that we serve, and with that, we still, we carry over a 95 percent attendance rate, our graduation rate most recently came out, was 92 percent. We feel like we do a really good job of educating our students. We're big enough where we can offer comprehensive curriculums, but not so small—we're big enough that we can offer things, but small enough, still, where we can develop those relationships that we discussed, here, which I feel is a real important part of education.

I guess, in a way, we know that we do a very good job, we know that we've still got a ways to go, because 92 percent graduation rate isn't our goal. Our goal is to be 100 percent, and make sure that all of our kids succeed. We realize that we've got a lot of work to do.

In sharing with you some of the things that we've done in the last couple of years to better serve our students, I guess I'd like to talk a little bit about the school improvement model that we've adopted, and it's called NS—it's something that's been around, and it's not something new, but it's something that we've taken and we're running with, and we've found good results with. We're using professional learning communities to drive everything we do. In a way, it focuses on three different areas. No. 1 is, learning for all—both students and staff—becomes a priority. The second part is creating a collaborative culture, and the last one is a focus on results. As we kind of reorganized how we do things, everything we do at our school revolves around four critical questions, whether it's lesson planning, whether it's looking at essential outcomes, everything we do starts with: What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty? How will we respond when a student already knows it? That really has helped us develop some interventions and some strategies on better reaching our students and helping them succeed. Collaboration has been a huge cultural shift for us, and I don't know how much experience you have being in a high school, all I can tell you, as a high school teacher that is isolationism at its finest. I go into my own little world, I shut my door and it's my world, and I'm going to do what I'm going to do. We are trying to break down those barriers because, quite frankly, we've got some great pockets of excellence where a teacher could do that, and those students would be just fine. In the same course, with a different teacher, those students are going to walk out of those same courses with very different experiences, very different levels of learning, and quite frankly, we owe those students the opportunity—guaranteed—that every one of those students, regardless of teacher, regardless of course, comes out with the same essential learning outcome.

It's been an awesome process because our staff has done a really good job—and we've taken groups of people that, at one point really

didn't even talk to each other, to now they can't get enough time working together. We've really seen an awesome cultural shift with that.

These teachers are developing what we call essential learning outcomes, where we're simplifying. It's saying that every course has at least eight outcomes that every student has to know, we're guaranteeing that. Everything we do has to meet those—everything beyond that is icing on the cake, but we've got to guarantee all students get that. These teachers are developing common, formative assessments where they can periodically check how they're doing, and then compare with each other. Talk about conferring the brutal facts, sometimes—when you're a teacher and your data shows that you're not getting it done when the other people are, that's a time for reflection to say, "How are you getting it done? Because I'm not." That's not easy for people to do, but it's something that we need to do if we're going to get better. I've been pleased with our teachers' willingness to do that.

We're constantly planted in the set of, looking at our data, seeing what our current achievement levels are, setting goals on how we're going to meet those, and then periodically checking to see how we're doing. It's a cycle that we're in. In the last couple of years it's been very successful.

We've carved out some time for collaboration, having early- or late-start Mondays where teachers come in at their normal 7:30 time, students don't come in until 9 o'clock, and that's been very beneficial, because there's a lot of work to do. Teachers need time to be prescriptive when they're working with each one of these students, and that's one thing I wish we had more of, is time.

Regarding some advantages and challenges of a rural school, I talked a little bit about one of the advantages is that you get to know kids, and you can really develop those relationships—not just staff, but parents, community members—there is a little more bonding that can go on, because everybody tends to know everyone.

My concern, especially at the rural school level, is our at-risk students. Those are the ones that, in a lot of ways, are not helping us meet that 100 percent; those are that 8 percent that are missing. In these rural schools staffing ratios become an issue because these students need some support. We just don't have the staff to support them, and that's difficult.

The other thing is, is when our focus becomes all on math scores and English scores, and AYP, what do they cut? They cut the voc ed classes, they cut the fine arts things to focus on these other areas, and in many cases, those are the kinds of courses these students need to be successful. I think this is a real disadvantage.

I know that one of the concerns I have as far as NCOB is balancing the needs of the rural schools with the urban schools. It seems like NCOB is very urban-school driven. That kind of leaves us in the dark sometimes, and that's a shame because our students deserve more.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jensen follows.]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRANDON JENSEN

## SUMMARY

Thank you and introduction of Cody High School

Purpose of testimony

How high schools are adapting to meet diverse student needs

What we are doing at Cody High School that has made a positive impact?

Cultural Shift at Cody High School

- Professional Learning Communities as our model for school improvement
- Focus on four crucial questions
  1. What do we want each student to learn?
  2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
  3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
  4. How will we respond when a student already knows it?
- Collaboration
- Focus on results

Advantages and Challenges of a rural high school

- Big enough to offer comprehensive curriculum but still small enough to foster positive relationships.
- At-risk students an issue of concern
  - Rural schools having to cut career/technical courses
  - Transition school and student support center

Recommendations for reauthorization of ESEA

- How to balance the needs of rural schools with the needs of urban schools?
- Growth model in measuring academic success
- Allowance of multiple measures of student performance to determine AYP
- Graduation rates to be determined by mastery of competency, not the ability to graduate in 4 years.

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Senator Enzi and other members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today. I am the new incoming principal at Cody High School in Cody, WY. At Cody High School we are striving to create a student-centered environment that provides multiple opportunities for students. Our everyday focus is embedded in our school mission: "Every student. Every chance. Every Day." Cody High School offers a comprehensive academic program that includes Advanced Placement offerings, honors offerings, career and technical courses, and special education. We serve 681 students in grades 9-12, of which 20 percent are served by free and reduced lunch. Our attendance rate is above 95 percent and our most recent high school graduation rate is 92 percent, up 3 percent from the previous year. This data helps support the approach we are taking in trying to meet the needs of our students.

As a current high school administrator, I have been asked to share with you my perspective about how high schools have changed and adapted to meet the diverse needs of students. I would also like to share with you some of the things we are doing at Cody High School to engage students in their education and prepare them with the knowledge and skills they need for success in post-secondary education and the workforce. In my role as principal and assistant principal, I have been directly involved in transforming our school culture to one that is collaborative, learning-focused, and dynamic to better meet the needs of our students.

Today, I'd like to highlight some of the key components of our school's shift in culture and the success we are having with students from a rural high school. For your consideration, I will also touch on some of the benefits and challenges that are specific to small rural high schools as you reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

## CULTURAL SHIFT

Three years ago, we began to look at ways to better serve our students in a rapidly changing 21st century world and to better prepare them for life beyond high school. What we determined was that a real shift in the way we did things needed to occur for us to reach levels of student achievement previously unattained. We found our change agent in the implementation of professional learning communities as our model for school improvement. Our emphasis is on learning for all (students and adults), building a collaborative culture, and maintaining a constant focus on results.

Over the past several years, our fundamental purpose has shifted from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. The most profound impact this has had on our staff and students comes from the four crucial questions that drive all of the work we do:

1. What do we want each student to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
4. How will we respond when a student already knows it?

These questions alone have provided us a new focus on student learning and are having a strong impact on how we approach teaching students, developing interventions that increase learning opportunities and ultimately, improving student achievement.

Another huge shift has occurred in the way we work with one another. We are making the move from teaching in isolation to one of collaboration. To most effectively answer our crucial questions, it is imperative that teachers work together in developing essential learning outcomes that are guaranteed to be learned, regardless of the teacher, and then work together to analyze and improve classroom practice. For learning to improve and for teachers to be able to be prescriptive to individual student needs, they need additional time to perfect their craft. Professional development needs to be focused on our staff needs. The past 2 years we have been able to carve out consistent amounts of time during the instructional day to allow for this collaboration to occur throughout the year. This is necessary to accomplish the amount of work required to answer our crucial questions. However, budget restraints and “one and done” professional development programs make it difficult to create real change in what we do. What we have found is that we have many teachers with years of experience and expertise that are valuable and accessible. By working together collaboratively, our teachers are expected to share ideas, materials, and effective strategies that meet the needs of all students.

The last cultural change has been a greater focus on results to judge our effectiveness. Teacher teams at Cody High School participate in an ongoing process of identifying current levels of student achievement, establishing goals to improve the current level, and then working together to achieve that goal while providing periodical evidence of progress. Our teacher teams have spent the past 2 years developing not only essential course outcomes for each course but are also creating common formative assessments that allow teachers to know if classroom practice is effective and to compare with one another to look for gaps in teaching and learning. This allows for teachers to identify areas of the curriculum that need more attention and to consciously look for successful practice by other teachers that they can replicate in their own practice.

#### ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF A RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

There are both advantages and challenges of a rural high school. Cody High School prides itself on being big enough to offer a comprehensive high school program, including a comprehensive career and technical educational program, to meet the needs of all student groups. Yet it is small enough to allow for the development of relationships that support learning and student achievement. My belief is that these relationships are crucial to student growth and achievement. The greatest challenges rural high schools face is being able to appropriately serve the at-risk students that all schools have and need to reach. Staffing ratios in smaller/rural schools make it difficult to give these students the support they need. Many rural schools don't have the necessary resources to offer comprehensive curriculums and comprehensive career and technical experiences are generally lacking. When scores in math, science, English, and AYP drive a rural school's focus, the first things to cut out become the vocational programs that many of these at-risk students need. The benefit of these career/technical courses is that they allow for different types of learning and application of learning. These are generally the exact types of classes our at-risk students need and excel at. Cody High School has been somewhat successful in identifying at-risk students early and applying specific interventions and strategies that are proven to allow all students to experience academic success. Without additional resources, we have developed a transition school that provides key academic support to specific students who struggle in a regular classroom as well as teach them skills that are necessary for success in life such as collaboration, problem-solving strategies, study skills, and interpersonal interaction. We have also transformed our in-school suspension program into a student support center that teams with our transition school to help students who struggle with academic and attendance issues. While early in their implementation, they have shown signs of

being effective in helping our at-risk students and are part of the reason for our high graduation rate.

#### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

I offer several recommendations for you to consider as you reauthorize the ESEA.

1. I believe that we need to look at how to balance the needs of the rural school with the needs of the urban school. Many of the issues facing schools in general today are similar in nature, but there are also some vast differences between rural and urban schools. As such, they cannot be looked at in the same light on every issue just as we expect all students to learn and achieve at the same rate.

2. I fully support the recommendation that States should be allowed to measure AYP for each student subgroup on the basis of State-developed growth formulas that calculate growth in individual student achievement from year to year. I also support States being allowed to use multiple measures of student performance in determining AYP and not just State assessments in language arts, math, and science.

3. In regards to graduation rates, I support student performance being measured by master of subject competency rather than by the ability to graduate in 4 years. Not all students entering the 9th grade arrive with the same levels of knowledge and ability and not all students learn and grow at the same rate.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak to you today.

Senator ENZI. You mentioned the need for the rural differences and that's one of the reasons we're doing this hearing. I have had a couple of people come to Washington from Wyoming and testify and they've been able to point that out real well. I did get the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to come to Glen Rock and we had people there from all over the State. What pleased me is the comments were a representative cross-section of what I hear all over the State, and he got to hear it directly and took good notes. Since that meeting he has said some of the things he heard that day back to me. People in Wyoming are good educators.

I appreciate the testimony today, but, there are a couple of things that I want you just to briefly explain a little bit more.

Dr. Abernethy, the P-16 Council, a lot of people might not be familiar with what that is, so, can you please explain the purpose of the Council?

Mr. ABERNETHY. Senator Enzi, yes, I will be happy to talk a little bit more about the Wyoming P-16 Education Council. Five minutes isn't very long.

It's a nonprofit organization, we're in our 3rd year. Representation on our Council is from all sectors of education, K-12, community college and the university. It involves policymakers, two legislators—three legislators, now. Wyoming Department of Education is represented. It's the spectrum of education and community, in a sense, brought together as an organization. We have, only about a month ago, decided as a Council we're mature enough now to expand our membership a bit, so we will be bringing in a superintendent and some more faculty, actually, some more teachers. We have two teachers on the Council, now, and we'll increase that number.

Our goals are pretty simple, but they're very difficult to achieve. They're easy to say and hard to do. It's simply increasing post-secondary preparation through better completion at every level. We want more students to complete through K-12, and we talk about post-secondary in a very broad term. We talk about postsecondary—when I do, in this sense—I mean something after high school. I think most people are increasingly believing that, today, to be successful in our complex world, a global economy that we

live in, to have the best career, the best opportunities, you really do need to have some education after high school. That's what we mean, and that's what our goals are, are to get more students to do that, in Wyoming.

Senator ENZI. And the P stands for?

Mr. ABERNETHY. Primary.

Senator ENZI. Oh, OK.

Mr. ABERNETHY. Primary school through—

Senator ENZI. Primary, preschool, postsecondary—

[Laughter.]

OK, thanks.

Mr. ABERNETHY. We could start sooner, but—

[Laughter.]

Senator ENZI. We put a lot of emphasis on preschool, too, because that does make a difference.

Dr. Rose, you mentioned the need for good resources, and attributed that as data, which I was very pleased to hear. There are a lot of resources that are needed, but I've gotten to talk to the Gates Foundation a few times, regarding the work they're doing in education and before they put any money into anything, they come up with a list of data criteria that's all measurable. I don't know if you've run into that or not, or how you're coming into developing the data requirements—that's what we need, data requirements. I served with John for a long time, actually, John was my mentor, he'd been there awhile before I got to the legislature.

When we talk about education, one of the things that is frustrating to legislators is, how do we tell people that we're getting something for the money that we put out there. That's where the testing programs come from. If you have testing, and data that can be compared across the United States and your group does real well, you can say, "Hey, our money is really doing well, we're better than everybody else." We want that Lake Woebegone syndrome to crop in there.

Well, this question is for any of you, what kind of data do we need to measure success? We're talking about changing to growth models, now, and I'm sure that's going to happen, so we can tell how much child development is ideal and instead of highly qualified teachers, we're going to be talking about highly effective teachers, which are the teachers that are able to move people along a little bit more than average.

What kinds of data would be useful to teachers, and again, for our bragging rights?

Mr. ROSE. Well, I might just start by giving you one example that we're trying to employ in the community college funding system, and that is to move from a system that essentially funds based upon students who are enrolled in a class, which we know is very important—students have to be able to get in the door before they can begin to make progress.

The problem with that is, that those students may not make it to the end of the semester. Certainly many of them, and particularly in community colleges, many of them don't ever walk across the stage, with any kind of certificate or diploma.

One of the things we have implemented as part of our Strategic Plan, and I gave Beth a copy, and I have plenty to share—our Stra-

tegic Plan was adopted last year and presented to the legislature and has now become our guiding, sort of, document. It incorporates a completion component in terms of our funding models, so that we are beginning to implement a funding process that says, a student will—and a college will—gain a certain portion of funding for the enrollment that they achieve. As you know, across the country, Senator, enrollments in community colleges are just ballooning.

The problem is, if we don't increase completion, if we don't get credentials that are valuable to people so that they can improve their sustainable wages and contribute to the economy, those enrollments, really, are kind of a hollow victory.

We are incorporating in our funding model a completion component, that says a certain portion of your funding, as a college, will depend on not how many you put in the seats at the beginning, but how many actually make a passing grade? It's where the data piece comes in, because we have to have very sophisticated unitary data—we have to know student by student how many complete. That's one of the pieces that is not directly resource-driven, but in fact really is the reverse. It drives the resources.

Senator ENZI. OK, thanks.

Mr. Mitchell, I've got one definitional question, here, you said "the D/F list decreased." I'm not sure that I know what a D/F list is.

Mr. MITCHELL. The students that received a D or an F in a class.

Senator ENZI. Ah, OK.

Mr. MITCHELL. Because they were not turning their assignments in, now they're forced to go to lunch and do their assignments, so they are increasing the grade point average.

Senator ENZI. Excellent.

You also mentioned you were having articulation discussions with the community college?

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes, we are—we're not too far away from the Northwest College Campus of Powell High School, and we're just starting to have discussions with math instructors, language arts instructors about what it takes for us to prepare a student to go to Northwest College.

We had to start that within our own system about 3 years ago, we started having discussions with our 5th grade teachers and our 6th grade teachers, and our 8th grade teachers, and our 9th grade teachers—having the same discussion about the blame game—it goes downhill from junior college, to high school, to middle school, and elementary school, and then we want to focus on parents, below that.

Those discussions have started happening where the 9th grade teachers visit with the 8th grade teachers, saying, "This is what we need at our level, so that we can move them to a level so that they're ready for college." It flows back, actually, from the top down to the bottom.

Dr. Breschwich, the President of Northwest College and I, the last time we met, are having these discussions about when and how we can get our faculty members together. Outside of that, though, with our recent concurrent enrollment agreement that we have, our faculties are talking together, on their own, about specifically mathematics and English classes. Very important for us.

Senator ENZI. I appreciate that. I do know that blame game, as we try to focus in on where the real problem is, it's always in somebody else's yard, one way, up or down.

Dr. Velle, you mentioned that these career schools, or career academies are 40 years old, I probably heard about them about 3 years ago.

Ms. VELLE. I know. At least I've been able to go to conferences and heard about them about that same time.

Senator ENZI. Yes.

Ms. VELLE. A little bit before that.

Senator ENZI. I almost got tears in my eyes when I think back, one of the people that had a career academy we're talking about, they had one that was a building trade. Everybody in any academy learns the same thing, they just learn it from the focus of what they'd like to do when they get a career.

Ms. VELLE. Right, correct.

Senator ENZI. This principal was so pleased because so many of the kids went to this building school, building academy, to be a carpenter. Before long the students figured out that they really had a lot of talent, and they became architects.

Ms. VELLE. Right.

Senator ENZI. And I think that's what we want—we want them to learn everything, and realize what their potential is.

Can you tell us a little bit more about what students in the Energy Academy learn?

Ms. VELLE. What we've learned by having the Energy Academy?

Senator ENZI. Yes.

Ms. VELLE. Yes. I can.

In any career academy, you need to have, of course, career technical education teachers who are sometimes not even known to the academic decorum as teachers, but you need to have those teachers working together. We try to get some of the CTE teachers, and the core academic teachers to work in like a cohort but a little bit different than the professional learning community in that it doesn't take all of the sciences teachers together and all of the English teachers together, and so forth. We have an English teacher, a math teacher, a social studies teacher, and a science teacher, along with the CTE teachers.

Well, when we started the Energy Academy, we knew that this community really supported the energy careers. What we didn't do, is we don't have a Career Technical Education course called "Energy," so we didn't really have an anchor for it.

We had all of these students who loved the academy—they really liked the academy concept, because they liked those relationships. What wasn't happening was, when they took their career interest inventories, they all had careers all over the place. They wanted to be cosmetologists, and doctors, and oil space engineers, and everything in the world that didn't have anything to do with—they actually didn't want anything to do with energy, because their parents did that. I don't mean that in a bad way, I just mean, a lot of the students did say things like that. Which is, "My parents work in the mine, and I don't want to do that, I want to be a doctor," or whatever.

Then when the Department of Education had the demonstration site grants, and we were able to apply for one of those, and that was—thank goodness that was just a wonderful way for us to get started into our next—what we thought was our second-biggest industry, here, which we thought was hospitality and tourism. Then we were able to hook it to marketing and culinary arts. We have a partnership, of course, with the college, so we have our culinary arts over here, we have culinary arts at the high school, so now we've got English, social studies, science, and math teachers working on projects with the culinary arts teachers, and the marketing teachers.

We've learned to benefit from something that the kids liked, so that they feel like they're really a part of something. We're kind of morphing, getting the Energy Academy into the Transportation and technology academies. Because we think we'll get a lot of those same students, but we know that we have a lot of students that want to take the automotive and diesel classes. They'll take their capstone class here, at the community college, so they'll take their diesel classes over here.

Senator ENZI. OK.

Thanks. Mr. Jensen, you mentioned professional learning communities. Can you tell me a little bit more about that? I'm interested from all of you in knowing what role community partners play in your reform efforts, and that sounds like one of them.

Mr. JENSEN. Well, I guess really, the essence is that the professional learning community is understanding that it takes everybody engaged in the same work, on the same page, and working toward the same goal to make something happen. We use professionals in the communities in the context of teachers. Certainly, as you get good at what you do, you should be able to branch out there and pull in resources from a community—resources and such to be part of that. In a perfect world, I think that's where we'd be. I think that's easier said than done. Certainly, the opportunity to sit as a group of professionals—and I think the key here, is that if you think of the students as “my” student—whether you see that student ever or not—if I still approach that student as “my” student, not “your” student, but “my” student or “our” student, and I'm just as responsible to make sure that the learning occurs as you are and as she is, I think that's when you really find that momentum that propels that student to areas of achievement which they haven't been able to attain before, because they're getting the focus of not one, but many.

Senator ENZI. So, you're looking at the school as a community.

Mr. JENSEN. Most definitely. Because, like I said, high school is a—we're a community of neighbors that don't talk much to one another, or have been. These gentlemen talked about articulation—having these conversations between high school and middle school, middle school and elementary, high school and college, and those are conversations that have to happen, so that we know what they expect, and then we can do what we need to do to get them there, and that vertical line is so important, it's got to happen more.

Senator ENZI. One of the things I was looking at in preparation for this was the drop-out rate for Wyoming. I've seen some drop-out rates from other States, and we're not doing as well as we

could, but we're sure doing a lot better than some of the other States.

[Laughter.]

That's one of those data points that's handy.

I did notice, Dr. Velle, you mentioned that smaller schools have more success—you said it much more eloquently than that, but in looking at this, I noticed that there were other high schools that have 100 percent graduation rate. Then I looked at the size of the school, and I think 27 students was the biggest one. There obviously is a correlation with that.

Ms. VELLE. May I say something?

Senator ENZI. Sure.

Ms. VELLE. We are not to the point, yet, that we have any students that are graduating from a career academy. One of the things that we really want to take notice of is whether our students who are in academies, and career academies, graduate at a higher rate than those students who aren't in academies. Because, that way we can really focus on the fact that academies are succeeding. We don't have that data yet. It would be wonderful to have, but we don't have it yet. Our students who were in the Energy Academy—we have our first group of seniors, so we don't know.

We do know that of the students that we've had in academies, not one of them has dropped out of school.

Senator ENZI. Wow.

Ms. VELLE. Not one.

Senator ENZI. I'll be anxious to see those statistics as they come a little bit further.

Would any of you like to comment on what you see as key elements of any high school reform effort? For example, do you believe that parent buy-in is important to the success, and how can we make whatever reform thing you think of work?

If you want to jump on the parental thing, you can tell me how to do that. We can't pass a law.

[Laughter.]

Anyone want to comment? Dr. Velle?

Ms. VELLE. Sometimes I think that the people that we have on our advisory boards are also parents. Very often they're parents of grown—well, for instance, Perkins requires that you have some parents on your advisory boards.

I think that the more that you can involve the students going into the community and the community coming into your school—which includes parents that just makes everybody more aware of what's going on. For instance, for each of the career academies, we have an advisory board. Sometimes, in the advisory board, people come in and talk to the students—they pay a lot more attention to that than they do to the teachers. So, whether the advisory people come in and say, "You know, in order for you to get a job at our place, you better not have anything bad on your driving record." Or, whatever it happens to be. Then the students really pay attention to that. Whereas, in the auto tech class, if you tell them that, they're sort of like, "Oh yes, you would tell us that."

Senator ENZI. So outside speakers help, then?

Ms. VELLE. Oh yes. Parents are great to do that.

Senator ENZI. Other ideas?

Mr. ABERNETHY. Yes, I think one of the comments I'd make relative to high school reform has to do with the role of the teachers and the community in the assessments. I mentioned, very briefly, the common core State standards, and an assessment consortium that I think Wyoming's very close to pursuing membership in. Thirty-one States, initially signed up. This would bring together teachers and folks from the community, teachers at each level, which I think, as I said already several times is a key part, you need to have the vertical articulation as well as horizontal.

As we build assessments, again, like whatever kinds of student measures/outcomes we're looking at, they need to be developed by people that truly are understanding and working in the trenches, that know what the challenges are, and know better how to assess the information in ways that makes it useful for them. I'm afraid sometimes what's happened, at least it seems to me is that many of our assessments are being developed with the main outcome being something punitive if you didn't achieve a level, instead of that—if you don't achieve a level, No. 1, what should you be doing about it, as a school, or as a classroom, or as a teacher, but what also, then, can we do with that assessment information that would help the teacher get better, or choose to get better? There needs to be some incentives for the teachers in this assessment, as well.

That's one of the things that really struck me about this balanced assessment consortium that I hope we do get involved with for the common core State standards. That is one of the elements that struck me as a good idea, a new idea that we really should engage in. Wyoming, along with, probably ultimately, be 35 or so States, I don't know, 31 right now—that would help—that would, together, develop assessments. I think Dr. McBride touched on this in comments he's provided you before, is one of the things that would be beneficial to education across the Nation. Saving resources is a common assessment that has local flavor that could be accommodating to the local needs and interests, but also would be one that we wouldn't have to invest so much resource in at the State level, so that we could spend more time in the classroom or collaborating, building relationships, which I believe is really important.

I'm not sure that was very articulate, but conceptually, I think that's really important and somewhat missing element right now.

Senator ENZI. Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. MITCHELL. I actually was handed the consortium information at a legislative meeting in Lander on Wednesday, so I read that information on the way over here today, and found some of the components very interesting.

You were asking about data points, what would the schools need as far as data points. We need an assessment system that does give us some type of school which shows where a student is, but most importantly, that assessment needs to have information about the progress of a particular student so that a teacher—not necessarily the teacher has to get better, but they need to have information about that student so they can refocus their efforts on the skills and knowledge that these students don't have. So, this assessment system that this consortium is looking at, we agree with that, for language arts, mathematics, writing.

On the flip side of that, we believe that all other curriculum areas are up to the local Board of Trustees. The Federal Government should stay out of those areas. If they focus on a national, rigorous curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics. Help us with an assessment that we've never had before, that we can compare apples to apples. We can do the rest. Not without Federal support, but not the punitive manner in which the support has come in the past.

This assessment is critical, and I do hope—unfortunately, I didn't read a lot about teachers being involved at this point, it's all about higher education. I hope that, at least in Wyoming, that they will bring classroom teachers into that assessment piece, so that we get the information that we need about particular students' progress.

Thank you.

Senator ENZI. Thanks.

Anyone else?

Ms. VELLE. I just would add to that that, for instance, with the Perkins funding, we are centering on achievement in the skills area. Technical and skill assessment is a really important part of that.

In the past, the only assessment that we've had in Perkins has been in math, and science, and so forth, and language arts. Now, the teachers are actually being asked to write the assessments. With the press associates in Jackson, they are writing their writing assessments, so that students all over the State will be asked to know the same kind of information. I think that's a really important point, there. I mean, that is for the Federal interests, we have the impetus behind that. The State is really stepping up to the plate, I think, in that area.

Senator ENZI. OK. Other comments on that?

Dr. Rose.

Mr. ROSE. I know that you're getting ready to wrap up, but I didn't want to let the time pass before I had an opportunity to, at least, express an opinion that's fairly widely held in this State, and that is to the point of how fortunate we feel in having you as our Senator in a position that you are in, currently, in terms of two very important watershed pieces of legislation, coming together almost simultaneously in the form of a Workforce Investment Act, and the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

I spoke, just briefly, in my remarks about how important I think we recognize in the education community, now, it is for us to dissolve the boundaries between pure technical and academic pursuits. We realize that, all through the course of education that these things can be compartmentalized and successfully, really successfully, delivered.

I would hope that in the course of the formulation of these two very important laws that there's recognition that there really can be more cooperation between the Department of Labor and the Department of Education, and though I think collaboration can achieve some really important goals—and, once again I—in my experience, in knowing what I know, the little piece that I know about how you operate, I think we're extraordinarily blessed to have you as our advocate in Washington, and I really do want to thank you.

Senator ENZI. Thanks. I appreciate the comments.

[Applause.]

Of course, the way that I most often get information is when Diana and I come back to the State pretty much every weekend and go around and talk to real people, not the ones inside the Beltway.

[Laughter.]

I also have some tremendous staff that are doing excellent work. I noticed that Beth was smiling when you were saying that Dr. Rose, knowing that that's what we were trying to press them to do on both of those. We're trying to get rid of some of the silos in the Workforce Investment Act, because we wind up with every State having some money that they can't spend, because they don't have anybody that qualifies for that, but we have other areas that they desperately need money in, and they spend it all. So, we want to get a little more flexibility there.

We will eventually get all of those things done.

Mr. Mitchell, when you were speaking before, you mentioned academies. How do your academies differ from Dr. Velle's academies?

Mr. MITCHELL. Our academies are basically grade-level academies where we have assigned a science teacher to the 9th grade, a social studies teacher, language arts teacher, and history teacher and before they are randomly scheduled for grades 9 through 12, so we're trying to pull specific teachers that only teach 9th grade, and another group of teachers that teach 10th grade, so that they are working only with those 120, 125 student, and then we give them common planning time so that they can spend time together, looking at data.

It's not necessarily aimed at careers. Ours is more of a community, the professional learning community approach, not necessarily—there can be some of our career tech education teachers in that group, but they can't be in all four grade levels. In the 9th grade, the rolling teacher might be part of that group, in 10th grade, there might be a technology instructor as part of that group, depending on when their planning time is.

Senator ENZI. OK.

Time to go back to assessments a little bit more, because we were talking about any kind of common standards. The idea that's evolved out of common standards has been to have some commonly developed tested questions that a State could pick from to do their assessment. I think that's a very expensive part of doing accountability—the testing. This has already been tried a little bit for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Any suggestions you have on the testing, I'd be interested in. You can either provide them now, or in writing, later.

When we're talking about assessments, we're also told that the schools want to have flexibility. I see a lot of head-shaking, here. What does flexibility mean to you? Is it how the Federal dollars are spent, that kind of flexibility, or how you meet the Federal requirements, or freedom from Federal reporting requirements, or any other—what does flexibility mean to you?

Mr. MITCHELL. I'll start, Senator Enzi.

Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Mr. MITCHELL. I think it's a combination of all of the above. Certainly we are looking at flexibility, as far as the different grant funds that we get that allows us the flexibility to use those resources as needed. We understand that there is always going to be accountability tied to those funds, just as there are the State-level funds. The focus can't be in every area. The flexibility for us, we initially are on-board with the common core standards, knowing that there's going to be an assessment of all of that. That's just a natural progression. It's happening a lot faster than I realized, because I didn't even know that there was a grant that the consortium was working on. But, not opposed to that, I just hope that we get to participate in that.

The flexibility that we're looking for, in particular, not all schools are failing, in fact, we think that there are very few that are failing. Some of the flexibility that we would encourage in the reauthorization is that, if your school district has no failing schools and meets AYP every year, that we get the flexibility of using Federal dollars the way we see fit at the local level.

Ms. VELLE. One of the things about flexibility that I see is that, for instance, in a career academy, the way you teach is way different than—it's not what you're teaching, it's the way you're teaching. I think that's where we'd like to see more flexibility where we know that we have to meet the State standards, we know that we don't want any students not to be ready to receive the Hathaway scholarship at whichever level they are aiming toward.

With the career academy, we need to have the flexibility that we can teach, say, out in the community. That we take the students out and they're doing something that the English teacher can, for instance—can I do a “for instance”?

Senator ENZI. Absolutely.

Ms. VELLE. The Christmas tree that's going to be at the White House this year is from Wyoming. There are some organizations in Wyoming that have been asked to do ornaments for this Christmas tree. The ornaments have to be something that are, like, 12 inches, like this. They have to be something that is Wyoming-like. I talked to some of the CTE teachers, and we were having a project-based learning workshop. And I said, “Here's a project that we have to get done by October, can you do this?” So that, they're going to make these ornaments, and they have to have 5,000 ornaments for this tree. The Family Consumer Science teachers are going to paint, and maybe the art teachers, as well. For their students to do the painting—the Tech Ed teachers are going to do the CNC routing of the ornaments and cut them out, the math teachers are going to have their students figure out how much material they need, the English teachers are going to work with the students to write up about the project and put it in the newspaper, and all of that kind of stuff, so we're going to involve a whole bunch of students, and a whole bunch of teachers.

They're not going to be doing what it looks like what regular school is like. They're going to be doing all kinds of other stuff. The students are going to get the idea, “OK, I have to be able to write, at this level. I have to be able to figure out these things with algebraic equations. I've got to know how to do all of these different

standards, but I'm going to do them in a project that makes sense to me."

That's where I feel like we have to have a lot of flexibility.

Senator ENZI. Good. I'm glad to hear about the participation on the tree, too. Senator Barrasso did a marvelous job of getting Wyoming in line on that, and getting a tree. Five-thousand ornaments from five-hundred thousand people—and that's counting everybody. I bet there's a lot of participation, and I'll bet there are some awards that go with that, too. So, I'm glad you're doing that project.

Anything else on flexibility?

Mr. ROSE. Senator, just one additional point, I think the National Governors and the Chief State School Officers, as they develop these core standards, one of the things that came out of that discussion is, we can really agree on some standards that are not overly complicated and complex. I think flexibility can really be achieved with the simplest form of standards that we can develop and agree on, rather than trying to dictate the very miniscule and very detailed ways in which proficiency in those standards is accomplished.

I think flexibility in part can be developed through—as Kevin said earlier—some different approaches, but some common outcomes. We understand that this isn't necessarily a prescriptive, and very, very directed sort of approach, but that we really can agree on some fairly simple standards that everyone should be able to achieve, irrespective of whether you're talking about an urban school district with the learning challenges that students face there, or here where we have geography as a constant—I think flexibility really, in part, can be done more effectively through simplicity, and through just simple agreement on some very basic principles.

Senator ENZI. There seems to be some interest and agreement that, since the Governors are putting together the core standards, as opposed to the Federal Government, that it might be more acceptable.

[Laughter.]

I was pleased in talking with the Secretary of Education where he made some comments about how Wyoming's standards had not been downgraded over the period of time in order to make the schools look better over the period of time, and that was quite a compliment to Wyoming.

Does anyone want to make any comments?

Mr. ABERNETHY. Senator.

Senator ENZI. Go ahead.

Mr. ABERNETHY. Senator Enzi, I would like to say, in a different way, somewhat the same things that both Dr. Velle and Dr. Rose have said. Thinking about flexibility, as I ponder these issues in education, really flexibility for me is acknowledging and devising educational practices that recognizes that students learn a lot differently. Each of us learn in a different way. Dr. Velle's gave an example where you're learning content, which ties in with what Dr. Rose said, I think, there's some level of content in, let's say, mathematics as a simple example. Some level of content that you need to be able to do regardless of what your career or your future holds.

How I learn how to do that content may be quite different than how Dr. Velle learns how to do that content, but we still need to be able to do the same activities at the end. Flexibility is acknowledging that we need to have an educational system that acknowledges different learning styles, different abilities in the way—and that's what intrigues me so much about the career academy concept, and building that.

I speak highly—and I will continue to do so—of the importance of maintaining the Hathaway Success curriculum. I do that with some honest trepidation, in a sense, in that—especially in rural schools—I'm not real sure how we achieve those outcomes from those courses in ways that acknowledge different learning styles. How do you make advanced algebra relevant to somebody—for me, it's a conceptual—I'm a conceptual learner, I love to think about philosophies, like I'm doing now, theorizing. A lot of our students need to have the hands on—they need to be figuring out advanced mathematics in a sense of building something, of using their hands, or of putting pieces together in a puzzle. That's flexibility.

I'm looking for help every day in how we do that, how do we make it relevant to different students, different learning styles, and still meet the outcomes that we need to have for our society?

Senator ENZI. Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. MITCHELL. I can tell you what's happening in rural schools in Wyoming, at least the ones that I've talked to, high schools. We're not opposed to the success curriculum. We support it, when you focus on certain areas, and students are driven into those areas, other areas suffer. Right now, at least in Powell High School, career and technical education is suffering.

We reduced a teacher this year, there's a chance we're going to reduce another teacher in the future, through attrition, because the students aren't taking those classes, because their parents are demanding that they take the classes that fit into the success curriculum.

We're struggling with that same dilemma of how do we still offer that high, rigorous curriculum in everything that we do. I've listened to the Superintendent, I've heard that they were going to release five career technical education teachers this year, so wondering how she was going to go about that. I had a conversation—and they didn't release any, because the community and the Board said, "We're not going to." Then you have teachers that have two or three students enrolled in their class, which is not good for resources.

It is a continuous struggle of hitting that high rigor for every student in the high school, and not focusing on two or three areas.

Ms. VELLE. That's a struggle for us, as well. When we have the success curriculum that demands that you have foreign language, for instance. If they had a little bit more option, if they could have an option of fine arts, an option of career technical education or language, to me, that would make more sense. I know that that's more of a State kind of thing than it is a Federal.

It really does affect our programs, very adversely, because there are a lot of students whose parents say, "No, you're not going to take construction," even though they would learn a higher level math and geometry in building the house. You can't take a con-

struction class because you've got to take a fourth year of math, or whatever. Or you've got to take this—another year of Spanish, or whatever it happens to be.

Mr. JENSEN. And in terms of flexibility, this is a little bit different than what we've been talking about, but I think it applies—I think the flexibility we need—the realization that students do learn differently, vastly differently, and that students come to us at all kinds of different levels, and to expect all students to reach the end point in the specific 4 years, it doesn't matter where you are here, by the time you get here, everybody's got to be the same—that's never going to happen. I mean, it just won't.

Having the flexibility and knowing what's important as we take the student, wherever they are, and get them where they need to be, and not be constrained by—it's got to happen in this amount of time or you suffer, because what's important here is that the student gets that, and that's what we're trying to do.

The flexibility in ways that you determine graduation rates, focusing more on mastering material and competency as opposed to time.

Senator ENZI. I know that Mr. Mitchell mentioned alternative schools, and do you have an alternative school, as well?

Mr. JENSEN. We have a pseudo-alternative school. We call it Transition School. It's a school within our school.

Senator ENZI. It's for what students?

Mr. JENSEN. It's for at-risk students who struggle in regular classrooms, regular 24 students. When they've shown that they've struggled in certain aspects, certain strategies haven't worked, we were able to try some things differently. It's a small group. We've allocated some teachers and resources to teach them in different ways. We tie in online learning, we teach them a lot of skills, discovery skills, and personal skills. In some ways, they just don't interact well with others in a big group setting, but maybe in a small group setting, they're able to be more productive, and we can help them out.

I don't know if you're familiar, much, with Rudy Fame, and her work on students in poverty, but they use some of those same concepts there, as well, because a lot of the students are the ones we serve in the transition school.

Senator ENZI. How are the kids selected for that?

Mr. JENSEN. We've been developing a process, basically it comes through teacher and counselor referral. We have certain interventions that we try to use in the regular ed classroom before we look at transition school. Oftentimes we need to see what the student is just flat out feeling and if they are unable to be successful in the regular classroom before we go that route.

Sometimes there's some signs or some things that are going on with a student's life that help us know, by referral, we take those and we take them to our team that looks at those referrals and then we make the changes.

Senator ENZI. How does the alternative school work?

Mr. MITCHELL. There are some referrals, but they have to apply and go through an enrollment process where they sit down with a counselor and we have one certified teacher at that high school—they have to set goals for themselves, the timelines that they're

going to meet their goals, and not everybody gets to go to the alternative school. They have to go through a rigorous enrollment.

It's not that you don't make it at Powell High School, you've got to go there. Definitely students who choose to be behavior problems don't necessarily get to go to that school, either. So it's not a dumping grounds.

Senator ENZI. How do the other students feel about having that school?

Mr. MITCHELL. I think it was difficult at first. I wasn't in the community, but I wasn't very far away, about 15 miles, so I kind of knew what was going on over there. We have several Powell High School students taking classes over there every day. They'll leave the high school and go to the alternative school to take a credit class through a semester. The transition and attrition back and forth between the students—the true alternative high school students, there's probably about 20 is all there are, that's the only school that they go to. We graduated 13 students out of that high school this year though, had their own separate graduation ceremony.

Mr. JENSEN. Senator Enzi, if I could just talk a little bit about that, as well. At the end of the year we have a little celebration for our transition students who are graduating. We had 14 that graduated this year. I started at Cody High School 4 years ago, so these were the kids that I've seen for the last 4 years. To a kid, as freshman, if I was a betting man, I would have said, "Going to drop out, going to drop out, going to drop out." It was outstanding to sit in that room with these kids and to—and these are kids who are graduating and moving on, some are going to community colleges, some are entering the workforce, some are even going to 4-year universities, but it was a neat experience just to see that and to realize on my end, you never give up on kids, because you never know, you never know. That was neat.

Senator ENZI. Of course, one of the things I want to dwell on a little bit is the difference between rural and urban. Now, I do know that when I'm in Cheyenne, they think they're urban.

[Laughter.]

I know when I'm in Chicago, they think that Cheyenne is rural.

[Laughter.]

I know that Secretary Duncan got a much different impression when he came out here. Incidentally, he came here after being in Alaska. That's pretty rural, too, although they might exceed us in population. One of the really nice things, when he was up there, he never saw a single wild animal, but he did when he was in Wyoming.

[Laughter.]

Mostly antelope, of course.

What sorts of things with ESEA, called No Child Left Behind, are difficult because of our rural nature?

Ms. VELLE. I would say one of the things that is difficult is the fact that a very small rural school just does not have the resources, usually personnel, to teach all the courses. One teacher very often has to teach many things. They might only have one English teacher, and so they don't have the luxury of teaching drama. They may have only a tech ed teacher, and that tech ed teacher has to teach

probably machining, welding, and construction, or whatever they happen—they can't do that whole sequence of courses, which everybody now is talking about a program of study, that every student should have a program of study. I think it's very difficult for smaller schools to really offer those programs of study that have the sequence that really get students ready to either go on to college or to go to a career.

Mr. MITCHELL. Senator Enzi, I have a few items. Some of the things that peer schools have to offer are supplemental services. In rural areas there are no supplemental services. There's just no other outside agency that we can send our students to, it's us. The other is, that an entire subgroup can transfer to another school. We have one middle school, so there's no school for them to go to other than Powell Middle School.

Then the other is firing staff. In small communities the school is the largest employer, and to fire half the people in a school system in Wyoming is not going to be taken very lightly, I don't think. There's got to be other ways that are nonpunitive, and I would hope that, in the reauthorization, the Department of Education looks at more of a support model for schools that are failing versus penalizing them.

In support, I mean by offering professional development for principals, teachers, curriculum directors, in areas of school improvement, bring in models of schools that have shown success versus penalizing. And the other is that it needs to be locally driven. I'm not sure about the cost, but it doesn't do any good for them to tell me to click on their Web site from Washington, DC. I don't get service from a Web site.

Relationships are important and we need to have a contact, not only from the State Department level, but from the Federal level. When a school is in trouble, they need people to help. They don't need a book to read and they don't need a Web site to go to.

Senator ENZI. OK. At this point, do any of you have questions for each other?

Mr. ABERNETHY. Senator Enzi.

Senator ENZI. Yes.

Mr. ABERNETHY. I have a question for Dr. Velle in the career academies. The students in the career academies, sound like what we call learning communities at the university. We have learning communities for our first-year students. The idea being to make a smaller community out of a population of 1,500 first-year students or thereabouts. Do the students in these career academies or learning communities, do they take the same kinds of high school classes, that is like the writing, the mathematics, the language arts, are they in the same classes for the core skills as all students?

Ms. VELLE. They take the same courses. They have to fulfill all the requirements for graduation, they have to meet all the State standards, they have to meet all of the criteria for the Hathaway Scholarship. They just do it with a, hopefully, a teacher that stays with them for a couple of years. These teachers meet together, so there'll be a math teacher, science, English, social studies, and CTE who meet together and they talk about how they're going to do these projects.

Now, they don't do everything project-based. They just do some things project-based. They collaborate, so it is very much like what you're talking about, the community. It's just a new way of teaching, like was mentioned, that there's a story about an engineer and a doctor and a teacher who died 100 years ago. They come back to see what's going on. The engineer and the doctor look at the hospitals and look at the bridges and look at the buildings, and say, "Oh my, nothing is the same." And the teacher looks at the school and says, "What's changed?"

It's unfortunate that we still have many teachers who go—and some do well that way. I don't want to say that it doesn't ever work, because it does. Teachers mostly go into a classroom and close their door and teach in isolation. What we want to do is make it more like the real world, because when you go out to have a job, you're going to need English and you're going to need math and you don't turn off the math skills and work on the English skills.

So yes, we don't want to take anything away from those students, we want to give them something more.

Senator ENZI. Thank you.

Is there any question that I should have asked you that I haven't? We probably have about 10 minutes, yet.

If not, we don't have to use all of the time, but I really appreciate all this information and I will have some more questions that I'll get to you in writing and some of the other Senators may have once they've looked at the testimony that we may need cleared up.

I think that there's a great future for education and I'm really impressed with the young people that I see in Washington that come from Wyoming. When we see these groups from all over the United States, and they're asking questions, I can pick the Wyoming kids out. They're just a little bit more independent and polite and thoughtful. You're doing a good job, but we can do better.

I remember when I was in junior high, the Russians shot up Sputnik, and we found out we were behind. The students were embarrassed, the parents were embarrassed, the teachers were embarrassed, the country was embarrassed, and we kind of had a revolution in education.

I don't want us to have to have that kind of a problem to get kids inspired in education. After Sputnik, several of us started a Boy Scout explorer post and we built rockets. I've talked to Homer Hickam who did the Rocket Boys, October Skies is the movie, and we judged some rocket competitions out there, and I like to tell them we did an electronic ignition on the second shot, not the eighth.

[Laughter.]

Out of the 11 of us that were in that, 8 became engineers. It did inspire people to get into science and technology, engineering and math. I was one of the ones that didn't. I loved the math and the engineering and everything, and at one time was going to be a NASA specialist, but that led down a different path. We have to take into consideration those people that—I call it, when God winks—wind up doing something different than they thought they would. I appreciate all that you do to make sure that they're prepared for whatever direction they have to go.

I think this has been a great conversation. I want to thank each of you for taking the time and effort to come here and, again, to prepare in advance.

[Laughter.]

I'll be telling my colleagues about that.

I want to thank the audience for joining us today and listening, and I hope that you have some ideas from this that you will also share with me.

If you have any comments on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which at the current time is called No Child Left Behind, please let me know. We know it needs to be fixed, and we plan on doing that in a very bipartisan way. We've been having discussions, the people from the House and the Senate are getting together, both Republicans and Democrats—education is pretty bipartisan—to discuss this issue. We've been pleased with the discussion so far.

At this point, I'll mention that the record will stay open for 10 days, and that's for members to submit additional questions to the witnesses and for people to send in comments.

The committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:19 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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